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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

PLAYS

BY

JACINTO BENAVENTE

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J. Benavente

PLAYS

BY

JACINTO BENAVENTE

FIRST SERIES

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH
WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SOCIEDAD DE AUTORES ESPAÑOLES IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
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INTRODUCTION

Jacinto Benavente was born at Madrid, August 12, 1866. He was the son of Mariano Benavente, a physician and distinguished specialist in the diseases of children, who had come up to the capital from Murcia, that most African and somnolent of European cities, some years before. If Adam should return to this earth, says the Spaniard, Murcia is the spot he would recognize first, for of all places it has changed the least. There is in many of the most fascinating pages of Benavente the sense of this semitropical, parched, unchanging landscape, where, as he himself has put it, civilization has not yet murdered sleep. Along the upper reaches of the River Segura lies many a town, baked into the arid hillsides through centuries of torrid noons, from which never a name has come forth into the currents of European life.

As a young man he entered the University of Madrid and there studied law, without, however, completing the course. But no routine study fixed his attention. In particular, he was avid of intercourse with persons of all sorts and conditions, especially with those whose lives were uncouth and primitive in their surroundings, and who were simple and childlike in nature, where the heart was never very far beneath the surface and the emotions ingenuous and strong. For a while he travelled with a circus; it is even said that he performed in the ring. Clowns fascinated him. All classes of itinerant folk have been his friends ever since. Subsequently he became an actor, appearing in the company of

María Tubau, where his first part was that of a sportsman, at that period an exotic, incredible, not to say highly ridiculous figure in Spain. He has always been a peregrine, adventurous genius, and of the type nobody ever finds dull. He has travelled extensively and is conversant with the languages and literatures of western Europe and of America, in which he is familiarly at home. No vital subject is alien to him. His field is world-wide, and his sympathies are of cosmopolitan range.

While still at the University he gave evidence of literary predilections. His first volume was his "Poems," published in 1893. This was followed by "Plays of the Imagination," which contains some of the finest specimens of the lighter Spanish prose, and *Vilanos*, or "Thistledown," preparing the way for his "Figurines" and "The Ladies' Letter Writer," masterpieces in a cameo-like perfection of workmanship and fluent satiric style respectively. These early volumes are at once the model rhetoric and the inspiration of the writers of the younger generation, who have fashioned a new literature and moulded into a finer instrument the stately Castilian tongue.

With the exception of Cervantes and of certain other robust spirits, more or less associated with the vein of the romances of roguery, Spanish literature, since the day of Lope de Vega and the triumph of the romantic theatre, has been prone to generalizations and to broad emotions. It has been essentially a fabric of imagination and eloquence. It was not only brilliant, but splendid, with its heroic sentiment and its purple patches of diction, yet nevertheless compact of convention and conclusions *a priori*, exemplified in the traditional honor of the dramas of Calderón, the consecrated types of Zorilla, the poisoned rings and unrevealable secrets of the elder Echegaray. But with the coming of the gen-

eration of 1898 a great change took place in the spirit of Spanish art. The forces of the New World penetrated the life of the Old. The loss of the colonies awakened the nation to a realization of the fact that it had been walking in a political and literary dream. Its traditions had become anachronisms of which it must rid itself before it could assume a position among the progressive peoples. Spanish letters to-day, in the hands of contemporary writers, such as Martínez Sierra, Pío Baroja, Valle-Inclán, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Antonio and Manuel Machado, Azorín—a company from which the name of Rubén Darío must not be disassociated—is a generalization from experience, not an imitation of books. It is founded upon observation and insists upon detail, which must precede generalization, no matter how plausible. The style becomes supple, delicate, adapted to reflect the facets as well as the general form of the subject. Through the impetus of the new movement, Spanish criticism also took on new life, and cut its way through both the old and new literatures, to which the test of practical reason was relentlessly applied. So sweeping a revolution would not have been possible in any other country in so brief a time, but the intellectual life of Spain is centred at Madrid, and in a small circle at Madrid, the prestige of whose names is unquestioned wherever the Spanish language is spoken. The new era had been delayed longer than elsewhere, but nowhere had the triumph of its principles proved so radical or so absolute.

Although in no sense its promoter, Benavente has been the most stimulating and compelling figure in this latter-day renaissance. By a coincidence, perhaps, his evolution has kept pace strictly with the successive phases of its development. His first play, "Thy Brother's House," *El nido ajeno*, was acted in 1894, and failed to attract unusual attention.

It was not an unusual play. On the performance of his second work, *Gente conocida*, "In Society," at the Teatro de la Comedia, Madrid, in 1896, it was at once recognized that an extraordinary talent had appeared. Here was a comedy which had no affinity with anything hitherto seen south of the Pyrenees, suggesting rather the technique of Lavedan or the Countess Martel than that of native writers, such as the Padre Coloma, whose sensationally popular sketches of Madrid life, *Pequeñeces*, had been the nearest approximation known until that time in the Spanish capital. The actors viewed the new play with suspicion during the rehearsals, and as time went on, even with utter disgust. At last the author himself lost faith. Yet the result confounded them completely. Its triumph on representation was instantaneous and final.

Gente conocida was followed by a brilliant succession of satirical comedies, dealing with Madrid society or with the fortunes of political adventurers from the capital condemned for a while to service in the provinces. "The Banquet of Wild Beasts" and *Lo cursi* are among the most typical of these plays, in which metropolitan routine is depicted as systematic preoccupation with everything in life which is not worth while. An even more mordant satire is "The Governor's Wife," apparently respecting nothing, much less virtue—or is it merely the eternal fool? For the greater part, the plays of this period were written for that most spirited of comediennes, Rosario Pino, and the association of these two remarkable talents, romping and slashing and making holiday together through every convention of the dull, the selfish, the idle, the commonplace, remains in the popular mind as the brightest and most dazzling feature of the modern Spanish stage.

At the beginning of 1905 Benavente had been active in the

theatre for eleven years. He had written over thirty plays. A decade of varied production had brought the Spanish-speaking peoples to feel, as by common consent, that here was an achievement without precedent in the modern annals of one of the great dramas of the world. It might well have been accounted a life-work. A shorter period has almost invariably witnessed the rise and decline of the favorite Parisian playwrights. Yet Benavente did not purpose to decline. Instead, a subtle change takes place in his style, such as had come over that of Cervantes between the first and second parts of Don Quixote. He renews himself. His phrase becomes transparent, at the same time richer and more simple, more suggestive. It pervades the whole work with the effortless clarity of the last manner of Velázquez, which is as if it had never met with an obstacle in the world. Such a style is the synthesis of the experience of a great writer, and comes only to the maturity of a great artist. It has been said that every idea of Benavente's is an idea and a half. We see not only the thought, but its reverse and its ramifications, its genesis, as well as the nature by which it was conceived, against the background of the common mind.

"I do not make my plays for the public," he writes; "I make the public for my plays." This is true not only in the matter of fundamental conception and arrangement, but there is an entire absence of the lesser tricks and artifices of the stage. Indeed, few writers of the first reputation have been such practical men of the theatre. Not only was he an actor in the beginning, but he has recently impersonated Don Juan Tenorio in Zorilla's play of that name, the war-horse of all great Spanish actors. He created the rôle of Pepe in his own *Sin querer*, "In Perfect Innocence," and only a year ago he appeared at the Teatro Lara and assumed the

leading part in his latest drama, *La ciudad alegre y confiada*, preventing thereby the closing of the house when the actor Thuillier was taken ill before one of the earlier performances. Benavente is in no sense a professional actor—far from it; these things have been the diversions of a restless and inquiring mind. He assisted in the formation of the Art Theatre, which was inaugurated by a series of matinées at the Lara, and played in his comedy, "A Long Farewell," at the opening matinée. His "House of Good Fortune" was staged by the Teatre Intim at Barcelona, and in 1911 he associated himself with the actor Porredón in the foundation of a Children's Theatre, after the manner of the Educational Alliance of New York, contributing, among other things, "The Prince Who Learned Everything out of Books," an allegorical fairy-tale of great delicacy. Unfortunately this venture proved short-lived. His greatest successes have uniformly been attained in the established houses, the Comedia, the Lara, the Español, and, of late years, the Princesa, to the distinction of which, under the direction of María Guerrero and Fernando Díaz de Mendoza, he has contributed in large measure. Only a master of the theatre could be so independent of its parade; rather he has espoused every reform by which the stage might be broadened or made more sincere. The theatre has been his workshop, not his life, and after each period of productivity he has withdrawn from public view, perhaps to his country home near Toledo, perhaps to travel, to lecture or to write, returning again with a fresh orientation and a keener sense of living values. "Ah!" he exclaims in the second volume of his "Table Talk," "let us have done with all counterfeits, of which the most common in the theatre are these: the confusion of the vapid with the literary, of the dull with the profound, of the extravagant with the new, the banal with

the poetic, the gross with the courageous and bold. All these equivocations invariably end in one other—an empty house, which is explained by saying that the play failed because it was art and the public was unable to appreciate art. But the true art of the theatre is to do good business, and to do good business you must do good art. Shakespeare and Molière were both managers, and as managers both made a great deal of money."

No dramatist is less theatrical, yet none has written more theatrical plays. Especially during his earlier years, he composed a large number of occasional pieces for the benefits of friends, or otherwise for their accommodation, or to tide friendly stages over emergencies. There are many of these —one-act plays, musical plays, farces in one, two, and three acts. They are the fruit of his lighter moments, and are theatrical not in the usual acceptation which implies a distortion of the theme through resort to artifice, but in the very nature and conduct of their action, which is of the theatre, conceived for the purposes of an evening's entertainment, rather than out of the sphere of actuality and experience. On the other hand, as in compensation, Benavente has taken an unusual interest in the best in foreign drama, and has made some notable translations from the English, Catalan, and French. An adaptation of Molière's "Don Juan," first seen in 1897, was his initial undertaking in this field. His "King Lear," a prose version of the tragedy, is an admirable example of the translator's art, while his graceful, flexible rendering of "The Yellow Jacket," the fascinating Chinese drama of George C. Hazelton and Benrimo, is so successful that it almost cries to be turned back into English as an original work.

Nevertheless, these productions are secondary in the history of his reputation. They have interested him but mo-

mentarily or in some very special connection, although they exceed in bulk and importance the accomplishment of the ordinary playwright. The real dramas of Benavente, in which he has expressed himself, recorded his impressions of life without hesitation or reserve, and made a distinctive contribution to the theatre, are far more numerous, as well as of greater richness and variety. "A Lover's Tale," an improvisation upon the theme of Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night," is held by fastidious judges to be one of the finest examples of modern Spanish prose. It was followed by other works in the same vein, and, after the close of the century, the series of comedies written for Rosario Pino was capped by "Sacrifice" and "The Victor Soul," both of a more sober nature, generally regarded as pessimistic in tendency when contrasted with the lighter works which had preceded them. The two great cycloramic spectacles, "Saturday Night" and "The Fire Dragon," in which the satirical, emotional, and moral elements were intertwined so inextricably that the public was confused and held its judgment for a time in reserve, brought the first decade of activity to an end. Benavente has since tried his hand at almost every *genre*, and he has been successful in them all—peasant drama and the tragedy of blood, so long associated with Spain in the minds of foreigners, satires of provincial and metropolitan society, of the aristocracy, dramas of the middle class, court comedy in the most subtle and refined of forms, in which by birth and breeding the personages are all royal. He has written romantic comedies and dramas, rococo spectacles, imaginative fairy plays of genuine poetic worth. Only the play in verse has remained unattempted, implying, as it no doubt does, through its diction a certain artificiality in the very processes of thought. In all these different *genres* he has moved with consummate ease, without the suggestion

of effort, until the drama of character has seemed the most facile and casual of arts.

The four plays which make up the present volume have been chosen from the later works of the author, in which his style has attained full development. They are as representative, perhaps, as four plays selected for the purpose of introduction to an entirely new circle of readers can be. They will provide some basis for an estimate not only of the more superficial aspects of his genius, but of his conceptions and methods —to an extent of his opinions, as also of the personality which underlies them. It is not difficult for one versed in the theatre to recognize when the voice of the author speaks in his plays.

"His Widow's Husband," performed at the Teatro Príncipe Alfonso in 1908, is a comedy of provincial life, and as such was received with a certain disfavor by the more precious critics of the capital. By the public it was at once accepted as a thoroughly characteristic triumph. Here is a play whose theatrical qualities are obvious, dear to the actor's heart. In structure a farce, it is primarily an adventure in provincial psychology, and condenses into effectiveness the provincial atmosphere—the town itself, its society, its intellectual status. The characters seem to have no mentality; their minds are atrophied and slow. We become conscious of the outward feel of things, of the streets of the city as they appear to the eye; the personages seem to be present before us in the body, through which the retarded action of their thoughts struggles to the surface with effort. It is astonishing that one of the most spirituelle of writers should be capable of conveying such a vivid sense of crass reality. More closely considered, this Protean quality is implicit in his method. Benavente never describes characters; he has no inclination to serve them as tailor, nor

does he give their ages away. In his plays there is no description either of persons or of locale. He does not set his scenes—the settings are implied, and the effect attained by an acute perception of mental processes which in themselves suggest the environment. Herein lies the secret of his versatility, in the highest art of description, which finds most perfect expression in *Señora Ama*, wherein the Castilian plains are painted in human terms, their bright, hard lights and vast, treeless distances being projected from the austere poverty of the minds of the *aldeanos*, or peasants, whose voices seem to break upon the surrounding void and are heard in the great silences of space.

In *La Malquerida* the process is carried even further from the point of view of drama. The tragedy was written at the close of 1913 as a tribute to María Guerrero, and is the last, as perhaps the most notable, of the series of peasant dramas presented with such distinguished success by the Compañía Guerrero-Mendoza. The detail is of the most meagre. We are shown a small town, apparently ill lighted or not at all. A brook, or *arroyo*, runs near by. Evidently the country is a rolling one. There are fields, a grove, a mill in the river bottom, a long road with a crucifix beside it, and mountains in the distance—"those mountains"—to which no adjective is ever applied. On the mountains there are brambles, thickets, and rocks. This is all. The drama is an emotional one in which the landscape and action are exteriorized from the realm of character and conscience, and partake of its nature, vague and blurred of outline, seemingly painted in broad but ill-defined strokes, which harmonize with a pervading sense of doubt and uncertainty, bewilderment of conscience and impending doom. The subject is the struggle of the individual conscience against the conscience of the mass, which is embodied in the talk of the town, almost the

identical theme of José Echegaray's "Great Galeoto," but now developed in the manner of a peasant drama by Guimerá. It is the sort of drama that the Catalan would have written could he have written this sort of drama, in spirit and execution a creation entirely apart from its predecessors. Once before, Benavente had performed a similar sleight-of-hand, and it is difficult to acquit him of a certain malign pleasure in the achievement. "The Eyes of the Dead" is obviously just such a tragedy of mystery as those to the composition of which Echegaray had devoted a lifetime. Having proved to the actors that true drama cannot be written around papers, letters, mysterious rings, or any such momentous hocus-pocus, and having actually convinced actors of the fact, he now turns about and through a typical transformation writes precisely such a drama, demonstrating that the mysterious letter is a device of the purest water, in no way incompatible with the possession of exacting taste.

Contrasting with a farce which is a comedy and an emotional drama which is a tragedy of character in reverse, "The Evil Doers of Good" is a comedy of manners, according to the classification of the schools. It is obviously a satire of complacency, of those fruits of religion which are not things of the spirit, and as such it was received at its first performance at the Teatro Lara, where it gave glorious offense. The Lara is the home of the *sábado blanco*, or innocuous matinée. No stage could have been selected where such an offering would have proved more unwelcome. Many ladies prominent in Madrid society and active in organized charity arose and left the house. Yet "The Evil Doers of Good," for all its wit, was in fact directed neither against piety nor organized beneficence. Benavente does not satirize individuals; he puts his finger instead upon inherent inconsistencies which need only to be presented in

their native contradiction to appear what they are. His is a civilizing rather than a destructive or reforming force. In this comedy, character and environment react upon each other in the domain of the will, and its significance is to be sought in the story of Jesus and Nativity, washed in together from the sea, which is destined again to carry them away. In "The Graveyard of Dreams," the same two lovers, now called Cipriano and Rosina, are driven apart forever by a relentless poverty against which no satire can avail. An apparent contradiction; the solution is different, although the problem is the same. In the domain of experience every problem is a special problem, to be determined by the condition of the individual and his relation to his environment. The suggestion of this conflict is always present in Benavente, in terms of feeling and the heart. It prevents his most acrid satire from becoming artificial. As his plays unfold, slowly, imperceptibly it wells up in them—where, we can scarcely say, nor how—until at last we find ourselves afloat upon the drama of human experience, of which the author seems not until then to have been conscious, and whose development he has had no part in determining. The effect of some of the plays is optimistic, of others pessimistic, according to the degree in which the conditions of life they present are susceptible of domination or are immutably cruel.

In "The Bonds of Interest," presented at the same theatre two years later, this satire is directed against the duality of human nature itself. The comedy is so deft and facile that it is easy to pass its significance by. Every man has within him two irreconcilable selves, the good and the bad, the generous, the sordid and base. We are not now a Jekyll and now a Hyde, as in Stevenson's story, but the good is inextricably mixed with the bad, which serves or dominates

it as the case may be. No man is so disinterested that he is insensible to the practical implications of his conduct. And with the worst there always goes some little of the best, so that no one may be said truly to know himself, nor what he is. In the play, Leander typifies the untutored best in man, which is good intention. He is unsullied by a life of hardship and defeat, of flight from a heartless justice, of cheats and deceptions and lies. Crispin is the slave, the servant—a rôle which he assumes voluntarily. All service that is worthy of the name is in some measure disinterested. Those who do the work of life must face the facts of life. If Crispin does this, if he does not lie to himself, however much he may lie to others, he will learn through observation and be taught by his own labor. In the end he changes places with Leander, the man of good intentions, who drifts upon the fortunes of others, for out of experience springs the knowledge of the true values of life, which is redeemed only by disinterested love, which is always service and sacrifice. With this the farce ends.

Spanish criticism has hesitated to define the personality of Benavente or to attempt any final generalization of his work. A product of eighty plays in little more than twenty years might well give the critic pause. But at a distance of three thousand miles, with the perspective of another literature, another stage, it ought not to be difficult to form some conception of this output in its totality as well as of its significance and tendencies.

From the days of the Goncourts and Henri Becque in France, the modern movement has been one of cults, of the ardors of the pioneer. It is the story of the rise of the free theatres, of new techniques passionately espoused, of reform. Yet to this writer art was a career, not a campaign. Strange

to say, in a land of warm, soft, southern sun, he has been infected to a less degree than any of his predecessors with a desire to hurry his work upon the stage. His temper, perhaps, is more akin to D'Annunzio's than to that of any other writer of equal rank, although it is devoid of that absorption in the picturesque for its own sake, in himself, in the colorful romance of the past as a pageant, which is so conspicuous in the Italian. Adolfo Bonilla y San Martín, the critic, has considered the development of his theatre from the literary point of view with authority, but the most penetrating and satisfying analysis of his personality has been made by Gregorio Martínez Sierra, himself a dramatist and scholar of cosmopolitan attainments, intimately associated with him professionally and as a man of letters throughout a period of many years. The portrait which he has drawn is both striking and definitive.

"Benavente does not compose," says Martínez Sierra, "he creates. The impelling force in his work comes wholly from within, and proceeds from the inside out, as a seed germinates, or perhaps more properly, as a crystal takes form. Naturally, good seed which has fallen on good ground produces good fruit, harmonious in development, luxuriant in bloom. There are in consequence, upon occasion, amazing achievements of technique in the total output of this great artist, but I will take my oath that, while writing, he has never for a single second concerned himself with these, nor sought to contrive an effect for a curtain, nor a situation in the course of an act. Is it urged, then, that he has chanced upon many? Beyond all question. As it is written: 'But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.'

"I should say that the varied qualities which, when fused, constitute his genius, are susceptible of almost any adapta-

tion. What are they? First of all, astounding clearness of mind. Few persons understand so quickly or so well as Jacinto Benavente. It might be said that he jumps from the first point to the conclusion without any intermediate process. To talk with him is the greatest possible rest to the mind. He needs no proof. He comprehends at a glance, without the necessity of waiting for the completed word to reach his ear. He sees ideas coming, and it is the same with events; he sees persons as well. This is why nothing astonishes him. If sometimes the course of events has been such as to give him pain, as must befall all of us who make this journey through life, I am confident that at least he has never been surprised. Hence his readiness at repartee, his irony; hence what has been called his 'detachment,' the oscillations of the moral sense backward and forward through his works. He understands everything, and while possibly he does not excuse it, he concedes it by virtue of the mere fact that it exists, a right to existence. Of what use to deny, since what is must be?"

Chronologically and spiritually, Benavente is the last of the moderns. Born a few years later than the writers whose names have hitherto been most illustrious in the modern theatre, he has been familiar with them all. He has had the advantage of a perspective which has permitted him to profit by their labors. When he began to write naturalism had already had its day and done its work; thenceforth its results might safely be assumed. It was no longer necessary to set them down in unending pages of detail. The theatric situation, which Ibsen had undertaken to rationalize, had already come into disfavor. Time was ripe for a new synthesis, for an inquiry into the inherent nature and necessity of those expedients which had, time out of mind, been accepted as mandatory upon the stage, whereby the writing

of dramas had come to be regarded as a business of purveying carefully elaborated shocks and surprises to auditors who had been prepared for their reception. But of course drama is nothing like this. It is not constrained to leap from situation to situation; nor will it suffice to rationalize the theatric; it must be gotten rid of altogether. In its very conception it is a blight. If a play does not express itself in terms of interest, then it is imperfectly conceived, or uninteresting dramatically. It is useless to call in the stage doctor or to attempt to stimulate vitality by a resort to stage patent medicines. Similarly by their nature partisanship and propaganda are alien to so knowing and catholic a mind. Benavente is the most sophisticated of writers, and his characters and conceptions are introduced so unobtrusively into the minds of his readers that they seem always to have existed in them, and are welcomed as old friends. To understand, it is necessary first to feel—we must sympathize—and it is this feeling which, when rationalized, is productive of great art. He has expounded his theory in one of his prefaces. Great art must not only be original, it must be tolerant and sincere—qualities postulated in its breadth of view. "The function of the artist is to tranquillize emotion through the intelligence, and it is only in so far as he is able to do this that his work becomes good art; his aim is to bring serenity, not to create a tempest in the mind. . . . Every artist in communicating emotion, is under obligation to set down not what he imagines may move us, but what has in fact moved him. The true artist will fly from literary convention as infallibly as the true lover from the 'Lovers' Letter Writer,' which lies ready to his aid. Good actors know that the right gesture suggests the appropriate feeling. We begin by imitating the letter and end by imitating the spirit. In art, as in love, woe to him who reminds us of another, instead of inducing us to forget!"

As early as the production of *Gente conocida* a positive element had made itself apparent in his comedy, amusingly characterized by him in a statement given to the press on the morning after the first performance. "If there is any moral idea underlying the play, it is this: that the aristocracy of brains, of politics, of skill, if it may be so called, laughs at and makes sport of the aristocracy of birth and wealth; but it is helpless in the presence of the aristocracy of the will, the unaided woman who is determined, whose conscience is active amid a society in which all other consciences are asleep. . . . I must confess, however, that I had no intention of conveying any such meaning. In fact, until this moment I had not the slightest idea that such a significance could be attached to my work." This interpretative element continually becomes more and more evident. A satire primarily psychological must in the end lead to some sort of generalization. The moral factor is explicit in such comedies as "The Evil Doers of Good" and "Autumnal Roses," and in the more recent serious plays, "The Graveyard of Dreams" and "His Proper Self," it assumes a dominant place. However, these are in no sense problem plays, nor may they be considered as expositions of themes. Always and in whatever form the drama of Benavente is a drama of character, never of character in its superficial aspects, its eccentricities, but in the human motives which underlie and determine its individual manifestations, without which it would be otherwise or cease to be. This is the source both of his unity and his complexity, which partake of the multifariousness of the modern world.

Benavente is not only an artist, he is much more; he is a master of life, of those human crises which arise amid the preoccupations of a complex society, when poverty, passion, or some other elemental force breaks for the moment through the dead tangle of convention. His drama is social, not

anti-social. It is not a glorification of heroes and villains and supermen, impatient to enforce their desires, nor is it concerned with revolt or reform, except in a purely secondary sense. The attitude of personal protest is in reality not modern, but reactionary—somewhat naïve—an echo of the old fanaticism. Of course, there is much in society that is susceptible of immediate reformation. Courage and resolution can work wonders. But there is much more in the world as it exists about us which is fixed, at least within the span of man's days, which we must first recognize, then submit to or ignore. The subject of Jacinto Benavente is the struggle of love against poverty, of obligation against desire, of imputed virtue against the consciousness of sin. His point of attack is where the individual and the social problem join. Upon these frontiers of the social life—which are also frontiers of the moral life—he is completely at home, in those fateful moments when society touches the individual to the quick, and he ceases to be his conventional self, and becomes for a brief space a free agent to make the decision which sets in motion again the wheels of the social organism which is to crush him or to carry him along. In its structure and apparatus, society is the study of the sociologist rather than the preoccupation of the artist, yet it is always present in his drama as a background, as a silent partner, perhaps, or as a relentless opposing force. These are *par excellence* social dramas, in a word, of man in society, yet whose action is conceived never for its effect upon society, but always in its meaning and implication in the life of man.

By a curious yet not arbitrary contradiction, in his court comedies he has expressed himself most unmistakably. No one has excelled him in the depiction of the elegance and sophistication of what is still known as royalty, its perfect breeding in the sphere to which it extends, the shadowy

unreality and irony of it all, daily becoming more manifest, while underneath there often lies an artless, childlike heart, masked by generations of veneer. The artificiality of the surroundings contrasts vividly with the simple directness and humanity of the theme, and throws his qualities into the highest relief. Only an aristocrat, says Benavente, can be a democrat. Such a luxury is not for the poor.

In the beautiful comedy, "The School of Princesses," Prince Albert sums up his point of view. "My philosophy is very simple—to accept my position in life with all its obligations, to realize that only by fulfilling them completely, that is, of my own free will, can I be happy; that in this way, and this way only, can we, in our unreal station, become the equals of other men who have not been born princes. You must not think that this has cost me no trouble. The government of oneself is a most difficult matter, but when once it is achieved, what splendid liberty! The day that each of us becomes a tyrant over himself, that day all men will become free, without revolutions and without laws."

HIS WIDOW'S HUSBAND

COMEDY IN ONE ACT

First Presented at the Teatro Príncipe Alfonso, Madrid, on the Evening of the Nineteenth of October, 1908

CHARACTERS

Carolina
Eudosia
Paquita
Florencio
Casalonga
Zurita
Valdivieso

The scene is laid in a provincial capital

HIS WIDOW'S HUSBAND

CAROLINA *is seated as* ZURITA *enters.*

ZURITA. My friend!

CAROLINA. My good Zurita, it is so thoughtful of you to come so promptly! I shall never be able to repay all your kindness.

ZURITA. I am always delighted to be of service to a friend.

CAROLINA. I asked them to look for you everywhere. Pardon the inconvenience, but the emergency was extreme. I am in a terrible position; all the tact in the world can never extricate me from one of those embarrassing predicaments—unless you assist me by your advice.

ZURITA. Count upon my advice; count upon me in anything. However, I cannot believe that you are really in an embarrassing predicament.

CAROLINA. But I am, my friend; and you are the only one who can advise me. You are a person of taste; your articles and society column are the standard of good form with us. Everybody accepts and respects your decisions.

ZURITA. Not invariably, I am sorry to say—especially now that I have taken up the suppression of the hips, which are fatal to the success of any *toilette*. Society was formerly very select in this city, but it is no longer the same, as you no doubt have occasion to know. Too many fortunes have been improvised, too many aristocratic families have descended in the scale. There has been a great change in society. The *parvenus* dominate—and money is so insolent! People who have it imagine that other things can be impro-

vised—as education, for example, manners, good taste. Surely you must realize that such things cannot be improvised. Distinction is a hothouse plant. We grow too few gardenias nowadays—like you, my friend. On the other hand, we have an abundance of sow-thistles. Not that I am referring to the Nuñez family. . . . How do you suppose those ladies enliven their Wednesday evenings? With a gramophone, my friend, with a gramophone—just like any vulgar café; although I must confess that it is an improvement upon the days when the youngest sang, the middle one recited, and all played together. Nevertheless it is horrible. You can imagine my distress.

CAROLINA. You know, of course, that I never take part in their Wednesdays. I never call unless I am sure they are not at home.

ZURITA. But that is no longer a protection; they leave the gramophone. And the maid invites you to wait and entertain yourself with the *Mochuelo*. What is a man to do? It is impossible to resent the records upon the maid. But we are wandering from the subject. You excite my curiosity.

CAROLINA. You know that to-morrow is the day of the unveiling of the statue of my husband, of my previous husband—

ZURITA. A fitting honor to the memory of that great, that illustrious man. This province owes him much, and so does all Spain. We who enjoyed the privilege of calling ourselves his friends, should be delighted to see justice done to his deserts at last, here where political jealousies and intrigue have always belittled the achievements of our eminent men. But Don Patricio Molinete could have no enemies. To-morrow will atone for much of the pettiness of the past.

CAROLINA. No doubt. I feel I ought to be proud and happy, although you understand the delicacy of my position. Now that I have married again, my name is not the same. Yet it is impossible to ignore the fact that once it was mine, especially as everybody knows that we were a model couple. I might perhaps have avoided the situation by leaving town for a few days on account of my health, but then that might have been misinterpreted. People might have thought that I was displeased, or that I declined to participate.

ZURITA. Assuredly. Although your name is no longer the same, owing to circumstances, the force of which we appreciate, that is no reason why you should be deprived of the honor of having borne it worthily at the time. Your present husband has no right to take offense.

CAROLINA. No, poor Florencio! In fact, he was the first to realize that I ought to take a leading part in the rejoicing. Poor Florencio was always poor Patricio's greatest admirer. Their political ideas were the same; they agreed in everything.

ZURITA. Apparently.

CAROLINA. As I have reason to know. Poor Patricio loved me dearly; perhaps that was what led poor Florencio to imagine that there was something in me to justify the affection of that great-hearted and intelligent man. It was enough for me to know that Florencio was Patricio's most intimate friend in order to form my opinion of him. Of course, I recognize that Florencio's gifts will never enable him to shine so brilliantly, but that is not to say that he is wanting in ability. He lacks ambition, that is all. All his desires are satisfied at home with me, at his own fireside. And I am as well pleased to have it so. I am not ambitious myself. The seasons which I spent with my husband in

Madrid were a source of great uneasiness to me. I passed the week during which he was Minister of Agriculture in one continual state of anxiety. Twice he nearly had a duel —over some political question. I did not know which way to turn. If he had ever become Prime Minister, as was actually predicted by a newspaper which he controlled, I should have been obliged to take to my bed for the week.

ZURITA. You are not like our senator's wife, Señora Espinosa, nor the wife of our present mayor. They will never rest, nor allow others to do so, until they see their husbands erected in marble.

CAROLINA. Do you think that either Espinosa or the mayor are of a caliber to deserve statues?

ZURITA. Not publicly, perhaps. In a private chapel, in the class of martyrs and husbands, it might not be inappropriate. But I am growing impatient.

CAROLINA. As you say, friend Zurita, it might seem marked for me to leave the city. Yet if I remain I must attend the unveiling of the monument to my poor Patricio; I must be present at the memorial exercises to-night in his honor; I must receive the delegations from Madrid and the other cities, as well as the committees from the rest of the province. But what attitude ought I to assume? If I seem too sad, nobody will believe that my feeling is sincere. On the other hand, it would not be proper to appear altogether reconciled. Then people would think that I had forgotten too quickly. In fact, they think so already.

ZURITA. Oh, no! You were very young when you became a widow. Life was just beginning for you.

CAROLINA. It is a delicate matter, however, to explain to my sisters-in-law. Tell me, what ought I to wear? Anything severe, an attempt at mourning, would be ridiculous, since I am going with my husband; on the other hand, I should

not like to suggest a festive spirit. What do you think, friend Zurita? Give me your advice. What would you wear?

ZURITA. It is hard to say; the problem is difficult. Something rich and black, perhaps, relieved by a note of violet. The unveiling of a monument to perpetuate the memory of a great man is not an occasion for mourning. Your husband is partaking already of the joys of immortality, in which, no doubt, he anticipates you.

CAROLINA. Thank you so much.

ZURITA. Do not thank me. You have done enough. You have been faithful to his memory. You have married again, but you have married a man who was your husband's most intimate friend. You have not acted like other widows of my acquaintance—Señora Benítez, for example. She has been living for two years with the deadliest enemy her husband had in the province, without any pretense at getting married—which in her case would have been preposterous.

CAROLINA. There is no comparison.

ZURITA. No, my friend; everybody sympathizes with your position, as they ought.

CAROLINA. The only ones who worry me are my sisters-in-law. They insist that my position is ridiculous, and that of my husband still more so. They do not see how we can have the effrontery to present ourselves before the statue.

ZURITA. Señora, I should not hesitate though it were that of the Commander. Your sisters-in-law exaggerate. Your present husband is the only one you have to consider.

CAROLINA. I have no misgivings upon that score. I know that both will appreciate that my feelings are sincere, one in this world, and the other from the next. As for the rest, the rest——

ZURITA. The rest are your friends and your second hus-

band's friends, as we were of the first. We shall all take your part. The others you can afford to neglect.

CAROLINA. Thanks for those words of comfort. I knew that you were a good friend of ours, as you were also of his.

ZURITA. A friend to both, to all three; *sí, señora,* to all three. But here is your husband.

DON FLORENCIO *enters.*

ZURITA. Don Florencio! My friend!

FLORENCIO. My dear Zurita! I am delighted to see you! I wish to thank you for that charming article in memory of our never-to-be-forgotten friend. It was good of you, and I appreciate it. You have certainly proved yourself an excellent friend of his. Thanks, my dear Zurita, thanks! Carolina and I are both indebted to you for your charming article. It brought tears to our eyes. Am I right, Carolina?

CAROLINA. We were tremendously affected by it.

FLORENCIO. Friend Zurita, I am deeply gratified. For the first time in the history of the province, all parties have united to do honor to this region's most eminent son. But have you seen the monument? It is a work of art. The statue is a perfect likeness—it is the man, the man himself! The allegorical features are wonderfully artistic—Commerce, Industry, and Truth taken together in the nude. Nothing finer could be wished. You can imagine the trouble, however, we had with the nudes. The conservative element opposed the nudes, but the sculptor declined to proceed if the nudes were suppressed. In the end we won a decisive victory for Art.

CAROLINA. Do you know, I think it would have been just as well not to have had any nudes? What was the use of offending anybody? Several of our friends are going to remain away from the ceremonies upon that account.

FLORENCIO. How ridiculous! That only shows how far

we are behind the times. You certainly have no feeling of that sort after having been the companion of that great, that liberal man. I remember the trip we took to Italy together—you surely recollect it, Carolina. I never saw a man so struck with admiration at those marvellous monuments of pagan and Renaissance art. Oh, what a man! What a wonderful man! He was an artist. Ah! Before I forget it, Carolina, Gutiérrez asked me for any pictures you have for the special edition of his paper, and I should like to have him publish the verses which he wrote you when you were first engaged. Did you ever see those verses? That man might have been a poet—he might have been anything else for that matter. Talk about letters! I wish you could see his letters. Carolina, let us see some of those letters he wrote you when you were engaged.

CAROLINA. Not now. This is hardly the time....

FLORENCIO. Naturally. In spite of the satisfaction which we feel, these are trying days for us. We are united by our memories. I fear I shall never be able to control myself at the unveiling of the statue.

CAROLINA. Florencio, for heaven's sake, you must! You must control yourself.

ZURITA. Yes, do control yourself. You must.

FLORENCIO. I am controlling myself.

ZURITA. If there is nothing further that I can do....

CAROLINA. No, thank you, Zurita. I am awfully obliged to you. Now that I know what I am to wear, the situation does not seem half so embarrassing.

ZURITA. I understand. A woman's position is never so embarrassing as when she is hesitating as to what to put on.

CAROLINA. Until to-morrow then?

ZURITA. Don Florencio!

FLORENCIO. Thank you again for your charming article. It was admirable! Admirable!

ZURITA *retires.*

FLORENCIO. I see that you feel it deeply; you are touched. So am I. It is foolish to attempt to conceal it.

CAROLINA. I don't know how to express it, but—I am upset.

FLORENCIO. Don't forget the pictures, however, especially the one where the three of us were taken together on the second platform of the Eiffel tower. It was particularly good.

CAROLINA. Yes, something out of the ordinary. Don't you think, perhaps, that our private affairs, our family life.... How do we know whether at this time, in our situation....

FLORENCIO. What are you afraid of? That is the woman of it. How narrow-minded! You ought to be above such pettiness after having been the wife of such an intelligent man. Every detail of the private life of the great has its interest for history. Those of us who knew him, who in a certain sense were his colaborers—you will not accuse me of immodesty—his colaborers in the great work of his life, owe it to history to see that the truth be known.

CAROLINA. Nevertheless I hardly think I would print those letters—much less the verses. Do you remember what they said?

FLORENCIO. Of course I remember:

"Like a moth on a pin I preserve all your kisses! ..."

Everybody makes allowances for poetry. Nobody is going to take seriously what he reads in a poem. He married you anyway. Why should any one object?

CAROLINA. Stop, Florencio! What are you talking about? We are making ourselves ridiculous.

FLORENCIO. Why should we make ourselves ridiculous? Although I shall certainly stand by you, whatever you de-

cide, if for no other reason than that I am your husband, his widow's husband. Otherwise people might think that I wanted you to forget, that I was jealous of his memory; and you know that is not the case. You know how I admired him, how I loved him—just as he did me. Nobody could get along with him as well as I could; he was not easy to get along with, I do not need to tell you that. He had his peculiarities—they were the peculiarities of a great man—but they were great peculiarities. Like all great men, he had an exaggerated opinion of himself. He was horribly stubborn, like all strong characters. Whenever he got on one of his hobbies no power on earth could pry him off of it. It is only out of respect that I do not say he was pig-headed. I was the only one who had the tact and the patience to do anything with him; you know that well enough. How often you said to me: "Oh, Florencio! I can't stand it any longer!" And then I would reason with you and talk to him, and every time that you had a quarrel I was the one who consoled you afterward.

CAROLINA. Florencio, you are perfectly disgusting! You have no right to talk like this.

FLORENCIO. Very well then, my dear. I understand how you feel. This is a time when everybody is dwelling on his virtues, his good qualities, but I want you to remember that that great man had also his faults.

CAROLINA. You don't know what you are talking about.

FLORENCIO. Compare me with him——

CAROLINA. Florencio! You know that in my mind there has never been any comparison. Comparisons are odious.

FLORENCIO. Not necessarily. But of course you have not! You have never regretted giving up his distinguished name, have you, Carolina, for this humble one of mine? Only I want you to understand that if I had desired to shine, if I

had been ambitious.... I have talent myself. Now admit it!

CAROLINA. Of course I do, my dear, of course! But what is the use of talking nonsense?

FLORENCIO. What is the matter with you, anyway? You are nervous to-day. It is impossible to conduct a sensible conversation.—Hello! Your sisters-in-law! I am not at home.

CAROLINA. Don't excite yourself. They never ask for you.

FLORENCIO. I am delighted!.... Well, I wish you a short session and escape.

CAROLINA. I am in a fine humor for this sort of thing myself.

FLORENCIO *goes out.*

EUDOSIA *and* PAQUITA *enter.*

EUDOSIA. I trust that we do not intrude?

CAROLINA. How can you ask? Come right in.

EUDOSIA. It seems we find you at home for once.

CAROLINA. So it seems.

PAQUITA. Strange to say, whenever we call you always appear to be out.

CAROLINA. A coincidence.

EUDOSIA. The coincidence is to find you at home. [*A pause*] We passed your husband on the street.

CAROLINA. Are you sure that you would recognize him?

PAQUITA. Oh! He was not alone.

CAROLINA. Is that so?

EUDOSIA. Paquita saw him with Somolino's wife, at Sanchez the confectioner's.

CAROLINA. Very possibly.

PAQUITA. I should not make light of it, if I were you.

You know what Somolino's wife is, to say nothing of Sanchez the confectioner.

CAROLINA. I didn't know about the confectioner.

EUDOSIA. No respectable woman, no woman who even pretends to be respectable, would set foot in his shop since he married that French girl.

CAROLINA. I didn't know about the French girl.

EUDOSIA. Yes, he married her—I say married her to avoid using another term. He married her in Bayonne—if you call such a thing marriage—civilly, which is the way French people marry. It is a land of perdition.

CAROLINA. I am very sorry to hear it because I am awfully fond of sweetmeats. I adore *bonbons* and *marrons glacés*, and nobody here has as good ones as Sanchez, nor anywhere else for that matter.

PAQUITA. In that case you had as well deny yourself, unless you are prepared to invite criticism. Somolino's wife is the only woman who enters the shop and faces the French girl, who gave her a recipe for dyeing her hair on the spot. You must have noticed how she is doing it now.

CAROLINA. I hadn't noticed.

EUDOSIA. It is not jet-black any more; it is baby-pink—so she is having the Frenchwoman manicure her nails twice a week. Have you noticed the condition of her nails? They are the talk of the town. [*A pause.*

PAQUITA. Well, I trust he is satisfied.

CAROLINA. Who is he?

PAQUITA. I do not call him your husband. Oh, our poor, dear brother!

CAROLINA. I have not the slightest idea what you are talking about.

EUDOSIA. So he has had his way at last and desecrated

the statue of our poor brother with the figures of those naked women?

PAQUITA. As large as life.

CAROLINA. But Florencio is not responsible. It was the sculptor and the committee. I cannot see anything objectionable in them myself. There are such figures on all monuments. They are allegorical.

EUDOSIA. I could understand, perhaps, why the statue of Truth should be unclothed. Something of the sort was always expected of Truth. But I must say that Commerce and Industry might have had a tunic at least. Commerce, in my opinion, is particularly indecent.

PAQUITA. We have declined the seats which were reserved for us. They were directly in front and you could see everything.

EUDOSIA. I suppose you still intend to be present? What a pity that there is nobody to give you proper advice!

CAROLINA. As I have been invited, I judge that I shall be welcome as I am.

PAQUITA. Possibly—if it were good form for you to appear at all. But when you exhibit yourself with that man —who was his best friend—after only three short years!

CAROLINA. Three long years.

EUDOSIA. No doubt they seemed long to you. Three years, did I say? They were like days to us who still keep his memory green!

PAQUITA. Who still bear his name, because no other name sounds so noble in our ears.

EUDOSIA. Rather than change it, we have declined very flattering proposals.

CAROLINA. I am afraid that you have made a mistake. You remember that your brother was very anxious to see you married.

PAQUITA. He imagined that all men were like him, and deserved wives like us, our poor, dear brother! Who would ever have dreamed he could have been forgotten so soon? Fancy his emotions as he looks down on you from the skies.

CAROLINA. I do not believe for one moment that he has any regrets. If he had, then what would be the use of being in paradise? Don't you worry about me. The best thing that a young widow can do is marry at once. I was a very young widow.

EUDOSIA. You were twenty-nine.

CAROLINA. Twenty-six.

EUDOSIA. We concede you twenty-six. At all events, you were not a child—not to speak of the fact that no widow can be said to be a child.

CAROLINA. No more than a single woman can be said to be old. However, I fail to see that there would be any impropriety in my being present at the unveiling of the statue.

EUDOSIA. Do you realize that the premature death of your husband will be the subject of all the speakers? They will dwell on the bereavement which we have suffered through the loss of such an eminent man. How do you propose to take it? When people see you standing there, complacent and satisfied, alongside of that man, do you suppose they will ever believe that you are not reconciled?

PAQUITA. What will your husband do while they are extolling the genius of our brother, and he knows that he never had any?

CAROLINA. That was not your brother's opinion. He thought very highly of Florencio.

EUDOSIA. Very highly. Our poor, dear brother! Among his other abilities he certainly had an extraordinary aptitude for allowing himself to be deceived.

CAROLINA. That assumption is offensive to me; it is unfair to all of us.

EUDOSIA. I hope you brought it with you, Paquita?

PAQUITA. Yes; here it is. [*Taking out a book.*

EUDOSIA. Just look through this book if you have a moment. It arrived to-day from Madrid and is on sale at Valdivieso's. Just glance through it.

CAROLINA. What is the book? [*Reading the title upon the cover*] "Don Patricio Molinete, the Man and His Work. A Biography. Together with His Correspondence and an Estimate of His Life." Why, thanks——

PAQUITA. No, do not thank us. Read, read what our poor brother has written to the author of this book, who was one of his intimate friends.

CAROLINA. Recaredo Casalonga. Ah! I remember—a rascal we were obliged to turn out of the house. Do you mean to say that scamp Casalonga has any letters? Merely to hear the name makes me nervous.

EUDOSIA. But go on! Page two hundred and fourteen. Is that the page, Paquita?

PAQUITA. It begins on page two hundred and fourteen, but before it amounts to anything you turn the page.

CAROLINA. Quick, quick! Let me see. What does he say? What are these letters? What is this? He says that I.... But there is not a word of truth in it. My husband could never have written this.

EUDOSIA. But there it is in cold type. You don't suppose they would dare to print——

CAROLINA. But this is outrageous; this book is a libel. It invades the private life—the most private part of it! It must be stopped.

EUDOSIA. It cannot be stopped. You will soon see whether or not it can be stopped.

PAQUITA. Probably the edition is exhausted by this time.

CAROLINA. Is that so? We shall see! We shall see!—Florencio! Florencio! Come quickly! Florencio!

EUDOSIA. Perhaps he has not yet returned.

PAQUITA. He seemed to be enjoying himself.

CAROLINA. Nonsense! He was never out of the house. You are two old busybodies!

EUDOSIA. Carolina! You said that without thinking.

PAQUITA. I cannot believe my ears. Did you say busybodies?

CAROLINA. That is exactly what I said. Now leave me alone. I can't stand it. It is all your fault. You are insupportable!

EUDOSIA AND PAQUITA. Carolina!

CAROLINA. Florencio! Florencio!

FLORENCIO *enters.*

FLORENCIO. What is it, my dear? What is the matter? Ah! You? I am delighted....

EUDOSIA. Yes, we! And we are leaving this house, where we have been insulted—forever!

PAQUITA. Where we have been called busybodies!

EUDOSIA. Where we have been told that we were insupportable!

PAQUITA. And when people say such things you can imagine what they think!

FLORENCIO. But Eudosia, Paquita.... I do not understand. As far as I am concerned....

EUDOSIA. The person who is now your wife will make her explanations to you.

PAQUITA. I never expected to be driven out of our brother's house like this!

EUDOSIA. Our poor, dear brother!

FLORENCIO. But Carolina——

CAROLINA. Let them go! Let them go! They are impossible.

PAQUITA. Did you hear that, Eudosia? We are impossible!

EUDOSIA. I heard it, Paquita. There is nothing left for us to hear in this house.

CAROLINA. Yes there is! You are as impossible as all old maids.

EUDOSIA. There was something for us to hear after all! Come, Paquita.

PAQUITA. Come, Eudosia.

They go out.

FLORENCIO. What is this trouble between you and your sisters-in-law?

CAROLINA. There isn't any trouble. We were arguing, that was all. There is nothing those women like so much as gossip, or making themselves disagreeable in any way they can. Do you remember Casalonga?

FLORENCIO. Recaredo Casalonga? I should say I did remember him! That man was a character, and strange to say, a profound philosopher with it all. He was quite a humorist.

CAROLINA. Yes, he was. Well, this philosopher, this humorist, has conceived the terribly humorous idea of publishing this book.

FLORENCIO. Let me see. "Don Patricio Molinete, the Man and His Work. A Biography. Together with His Correspondence and an Estimate of His Life." A capital idea! They were great friends, you know, although I don't suppose that there can be anything particular in the book. What could Casalonga tell us anyway?

CAROLINA. Us? Nothing. But go on, go on.

FLORENCIO. You don't say! Letters of Patricio's. Addressed to whom?

CAROLINA. To the author of the book, so it seems. Personal letters, they are confidential. Go on, go on.

FLORENCIO. "Dear Friend: Life is sad. Perhaps you ask the cause of my disillusionment. How is it that I have lost my faith in the future, in the future of our unfortunate land?" I remember that time. He was already ill. This letter was written after he had liver complaint and took a dark view of everything. Ah! What a pity that great men should be subject to such infirmities! Think of the intellect being made the slave of the liver! We are but dust. "The future of this unfortunate land...."

CAROLINA. No, that doesn't amount to anything. Lower down, lower down. Go on.

FLORENCIO. "Life is sad!"

CAROLINA. Are you beginning all over again?

FLORENCIO. No, he repeats himself. What is this? "I never loved but once in my life; I never loved but one woman —my wife." He means you.

CAROLINA. Yes. Go on, go on.

FLORENCIO. "I never trusted but one friend, my friend Florencio." He means me.

CAROLINA. Yes, yes; he means you. But go on, go on.

FLORENCIO. I wonder what he can be driving at. Ah! What does he say? That you, that I....

CAROLINA. Go on, go on.

FLORENCIO. "This woman and this man, the two greatest, the two pure, the two unselfish passions of my life, in whom my very being was consumed—how can I bring myself to confess it? I hardly dare admit it to myself! They are in love—they love each other madly—in secret—perhaps without even suspecting themselves."

CAROLINA. What do you think of that?

FLORENCIO. Suspecting themselves.... "They are struggling to overcome their guilty passion, but how long will they continue to struggle? Yet I am sorry for them both. What ought I to do? I cannot sleep."

CAROLINA. What do you say?

FLORENCIO. Impossible! He never wrote such letters. Besides, if he did, they ought never to have been published.

CAROLINA. But true or false, they have been published, and here they are. Ah! But this is nothing! You ought to see what he says farther on. He goes on communicating his observations, and there are some, to be perfectly frank, which nobody could have made but himself.

FLORENCIO. You don't mean to tell me that you think these letters are genuine?

CAROLINA. They might be for all we know. He gives dates and details.

FLORENCIO. And all the time we thought he suspected nothing!

CAROLINA. You do jump so at conclusions, Florencio. How could he suspect? You know how careful we were about everything, no matter what happened, so as not to hurt his feelings.

FLORENCIO. This only goes to show all the good that it did us.

CAROLINA. He could only suspect—that it was the truth; that we were loving in silence.

FLORENCIO. Then perhaps you can explain to me what was the use of all this silence? Don't you see that what he has done now is to go and blurt the whole thing out to this rascal Casalonga?—an unscrupulous knave whose only interest in the matter is to turn these confidences to his own advantage! It is useless to attempt to defend it. Such

foolishness was unpardonable. I should never have believed it of my friend. If he had any doubts about me —about us—why didn't he say so? Then we could have been more careful, and have done something to ease his mind. But this notion of running and telling the first person who happens along.... What a position does it leave me in? In what light do we appear at this time? Now, when everybody is paying respect to his memory, and I have put myself to all this trouble in order to raise money for this monument—what are people going to think when they read these things?

CAROLINA. I always said that we would have trouble with that monument.

FLORENCIO. How shall I have the face to present myself to-morrow before the monument?

CAROLINA. My sisters-in-law were right. We are going to be conspicuous.

FLORENCIO. Ah! But this must be stopped. I shall run at once to the offices of the papers, to the judicial authorities, to the governor, to all the booksellers. As for this Casalonga— Ah! I will settle with him! Either he will retract and confess that these letters are forgeries from beginning to end, or I will kill him! I will fight with him in earnest!

CAROLINA. Florencio! Don't forget yourself! You are going too far. You don't mean a duel? To expose your life?

FLORENCIO. Don't you see that it is impossible to submit to such an indignity? Where is this thing going to stop? Is nobody's private life to be secure? And this goes deeper than the private life—it impugns the sanctity of our intentions.

CAROLINA. No, Florencio!

FLORENCIO. Let me go!

CAROLINA. Florencio! Anything but a duel! No, no!

FLORENCIO. Ah! Either he will retract and withdraw the edition of this libel or, should he refuse....

CAROLINA. Zurita!

FLORENCIO. My friend.... You are just in time!

ZURITA *enters.*

ZURITA. Don Florencio.... Carolina.... Don't say a word! I know how you feel.

FLORENCIO. Did you see it? Did you hear it? Is this a civilized country in which we live?

CAROLINA. But surely he has not heard it already?

ZURITA. Yes, at the Club. Some one had the book; they were passing it around....

FLORENCIO. At the Club?

ZURITA. Don't be alarmed. Everybody thinks it is blackmail—a case of *chantage.* Don Patricio could never have written such letters.

FLORENCIO. Ah! So they think that?

ZURITA. Even if he had, they deal with private matters, which ought never to have been made public.

FLORENCIO. Exactly my idea—with private matters; they are confidential.

ZURITA. I lost no time, as you may be sure, in hurrying to Valdivieso's shop, where the books are on sale. I found him amazed; he was entirely innocent. He bought the copies supposing that the subject was of timely importance; that it was of a serious nature. He hurried at once to withdraw the copies from the window, and ran in search of the author.

FLORENCIO. Of the author? Is the author in town?

ZURITA. Yes, he came with the books; he arrived with them this morning.

FLORENCIO. Ah! So this scamp Casalonga is here, is he? Tell me where I can find him!

ZURITA. At the Hotel de Europa.

CAROLINA. Florencio! Don't you go! Hold him back! He means to challenge him.

ZURITA. Never! It is not worth the trouble. Besides, you ought to hold yourself above such things. Your wife is above them.

FLORENCIO. But what will people say, friend Zurita? What will people say?

ZURITA. Everybody thinks it is a huge joke.

FLORENCIO. A joke? Then our position is ridiculous.

ZURITA. I did not say that. What I do say....

FLORENCIO. No, no, friend Zurita; you are a man of honor, you know that it is necessary for me to kill this man.

CAROLINA. But suppose he is the one who kills you? No, Florencio, not a duel! What is the use of the courts?

FLORENCIO. No, I prefer to fight. My dear Zurita, run in search of another friend and stop at the Hotel de Europa as my representatives. Seek out this man, exact reparation upon the spot—a reparation which shall be resounding, complete. Either he declares over his own signature that those letters are impudent forgeries or, should he refuse....

CAROLINA. Florencio!

FLORENCIO. Stop at nothing! Do not haggle over terms. Let it be pistols with real bullets, as we pace forward each to each!

ZURITA. But Don Florencio!

CAROLINA. Don't go, I beg of you! Don't leave the house!

FLORENCIO. You are my friend—go at once!

CAROLINA. No, he will never go!

ZURITA. But Don Florencio! Consider.... The situation is serious.

FLORENCIO. When a man is made ridiculous the situation ceases to be serious! How shall I have the face to show myself before the monument? I—his most intimate friend! She, my wife, his widow! And everybody thinking all the while of those letters, imagining that I, that she.... No, no! Run! Bring me that retraction at once.

ZURITA. Not so fast! I hear the voice of Valdivieso.

FLORENCIO. Eh? And Casalonga's! Has that man the audacity to present himself in my house?

ZURITA. Be calm! Since he is here, perhaps he comes to explain. Let me see—— [*He goes out.*

CAROLINA. Florencio! Don't you receive him! Don't you have anything to do with that man!

FLORENCIO. I am in my own house. Never fear! I shall not forget to conduct myself as a gentleman. Now we shall see how he explains the matter; we shall see. But you had better retire first. Questions of honor are not for women.

CAROLINA. You know best; only I think I might remain within earshot. I am nervous. My dear!—Where are your arms?

FLORENCIO. What do I need of arms?

CAROLINA. Be careful just the same. Keep cool! Think of me.

FLORENCIO. I am in my own house. Have no fear.

CAROLINA. It upsets me dreadfully to see you in such a state.

FLORENCIO. What are you doing now?

CAROLINA. Removing these vases in case you should throw things. I should hate awfully to lose them; they were a present.

FLORENCIO. Hurry, dear!

CAROLINA. I am horribly nervous. Keep cool, for heavens' sake! Control yourself. [*Goes out.*

ZURITA *re-enters.*

ZURITA. Are you calmer now?

FLORENCIO. Absolutely. Is that man here?

ZURITA. Yes, Valdivieso brought him. He desires to explain.

FLORENCIO. Who? Valdivieso? Naturally. But that other fellow, that Casalonga—what does he want?

ZURITA. To have a few words with you; to offer a thousand explanations.

FLORENCIO. No more than one explanation is possible.

ZURITA. Consider a moment. In my opinion it will be wiser to receive him. He appears to be innocent.

FLORENCIO. Of the first instincts of a gentleman.

ZURITA. Exactly. I did not venture to put it so plainly. He attaches no importance to the affair whatever.

FLORENCIO. Of course not! It is nothing to him.

ZURITA. Nothing. However, you will find him disposed to go to any length—retract, make a denial, withdraw the book from circulation. You had best have a few words with him. But first promise me to control yourself. Shall I ask them to come in?

FLORENCIO. Yes....yes! Ask them to come in.

ZURITA. Poor Valdivieso is awfully put out. He always had such a high opinion of you. You are one of the two or three persons in this town who buy books. It would be a tremendous relief to him if you would only tell him that you knew he was incapable....

FLORENCIO. Thoroughly! Poor Valdivieso! Ask him to come in; ask them both to come in.

ZURITA *retires and returns presently with* VALDIVIESO *and* CASALONGA.

VALDIVIESO. Señor Don Florencio! I hardly know what to say. I am sure that you will not question my good faith in the matter. I had no idea.... in fact I never suspected....

FLORENCIO. I always knew you were innocent; but this person....

CASALONGA. Come, come now! Don't blame it on me. How the devil was I to know that you were here—and married to his widow! Sport for the gods!

FLORENCIO. Do you hear what he says?

ZURITA. I told you that he appeared to be innocent.

FLORENCIO. And I told you that he was devoid of the first instincts of a gentleman; although I failed to realize to what an extent. Sir——

CASALONGA. Don't be absurd! Stop making faces at me.

FLORENCIO. In the first place, I don't recall that we were ever so intimate.

CASALONGA. Of course we were! Of course! Anyhow, what difference does it make? We were together for a whole season; we were inseparable. Hard times those for us both! But what did we care? When one of us was out of money, all he had to do was to ask the other, and be satisfied.

FLORENCIO. Yes; I seem to recall that the other was always I.

CASALONGA. Ha, ha, ha! That might be. Stranger things have happened. But you are not angry with me, are you? The thing is not worth all this fuss.

FLORENCIO. Do you hear what he says?

VALDIVIESO. You may be sure that if I had had the slightest idea.... I bought the books so as to take advantage of the timeliness of the monument. If I had ever suspected....

CASALONGA. Identically my position—to take advantage of the monument. Life is hard. While the conservatives

are in power, I am reduced to extremities. I am at my wit's end to earn an honest penny.

FLORENCIO. I admire your colossal impudence. What are you going to do with a man like this?

ZURITA. Exactly the question that occurred to me. What are you going to do?

CASALONGA. For a time I was reduced to writing plays—like everybody else—although mine were better. That was the reason they did not succeed. Then I married my last landlady; I was obliged to settle with her somehow. A little difference arose between us, so we agreed to separate amicably after smashing all the furniture. However, that will be of no interest to you.

FLORENCIO. No, no, it is of no interest to me.

CASALONGA. A novel, my boy! A veritable work of romance! I wandered all over the country explaining views for the cinematograph. You know what a gift I have for talk? Wherever I appeared the picture houses were crowded —even to the exits. Then my voice gave out. I was obliged to find some other outlet for my activities. I thought of my friends. You know what friends are; as soon as a man needs them he hasn't any friends. Which way was I to turn? I happened to hear that you were unveiling a monument to the memory of friend Patricio. Poor Patricio! That man was a friend! He could always be relied upon. It occurred to me that I might write out a few pages of reminiscences—preferably something personal—and publish any letters of his which I had chanced to preserve.

FLORENCIO. What luck!

CASALONGA. Pshaw! Bread and butter—bread and butter, man! A mere pittance. It occurred to me that they would sell better here than anywhere else—this is where he lived. So I came this morning third class—think of that,

third class!—and hurried at once to this fellow's shop. I placed two thousand copies with him, which he took from me at a horrible discount. You know what these booksellers are....

VALDIVIESO. I call you to witness—what was customary under the circumstances. He was selling for cash.

CASALONGA. Am I the man to deny it? You can divide mankind into two classes—knaves and fools.

VALDIVIESO. Listen to this—

CASALONGA. You are not one of the fools.

VALDIVIESO. I protest! How am I to profit by the transaction? Do you suppose that I shall sell a single copy of this libel now that I know that it is offensive to my particular, my excellent friend, Don Florencio, and to his respected wife?

FLORENCIO. Thanks, friend Valdivieso, thanks for that.

VALDIVIESO. I shall burn the edition, although you can imagine what that will cost.

FLORENCIO. The loss will be mine. It will be at my expense.

CASALONGA. What did I tell you? Florencio will pay. What are you complaining about?—If I were in your place, though, I'd be hanged if I would give the man one penny.

VALDIVIESO. What? When you have collected spot cash?

CASALONGA. You don't call that collecting? Not at that discount. The paper was worth more.

FLORENCIO. The impudence of the thing was worth more than the paper.

CASALONGA. Ha, ha, ha! Really, I cannot find it in my heart to be angry with you. You are too clever! But what was I to do? I had to find some outlet for my activities. Are you going to kill me?

FLORENCIO. I have made my arrangements. Do you suppose that I will submit meekly to such an indignity? If you refuse to fight, I will hale you before the courts.

CASALONGA. Drop that tragic tone. A duel? Between us? Over what? Because the wife of a friend—who at the same time happens to be your wife—has been intimate with you? Suppose it had been with some one else!

FLORENCIO. That supposition is improper.

CASALONGA. You are the first man I ever heard of who was offended because it was said that he had been intimate with his wife. The thing is preposterous. How are we ever going to fight over it?

ZURITA. I can see his point of view.

FLORENCIO. Patricio could never have written those letters, much less to you.

CASALONGA. Talk as much as you like, the letters are genuine. Although it may have been foolish of Patricio to have written them—that is a debatable question. I published them so as to enliven the book. A little harmless suggestion —people look for it; it adds spice. Aside from that, what motive could I have had for dragging you into it?

FLORENCIO. I admire your frankness at least.

ZURITA. What do you propose to do with this man?

FLORENCIO. What do you propose?

CASALONGA. You know I was always fond of you. You are a man of ability.

FLORENCIO. Thanks.

CASALONGA. You have more ability than Patricio had. He was a worthy soul, no doubt, but between us, who were in the secret, an utter blockhead.

FLORENCIO. Hardly that.

CASALONGA. I need not tell you what reputations amount

to in this country. If he had had your brains, your transcendent ability....

FLORENCIO. How can I stop this man from talking?

CASALONGA. You have always been too modest in my opinion; you have remained in the background in order to give him a chance to shine, to attract attention. Everybody knows that his best speeches were written by you.

FLORENCIO. You have no right to betray my confidence.

CASALONGA. Yes, gentlemen, it is only just that you should know. The real brains belonged to this man, he is the one who should have had the statue. As a friend he is wonderful, unique!

FLORENCIO. How am I going to fight with this man?

CASALONGA. I will give out a statement at once—for public consumption—declaring that the letters are forgeries—or whatever you think best; as it appeals to you. Fix it up for yourself. It is of no consequence anyhow. I am above this sort of thing. I should be sorry, however, to see this fellow receive more than his due, which is two *reals* a copy, or what he paid me.

VALDIVIESO. I cannot permit you to meddle in my affairs. You are a rogue and a cheat.

CASALONGA. A rogue and a cheat? In that case you are the one I will fight with. You are no friend of mine. You are an exploiter of other men's brains.

VALDIVIESO. You are willing to fight with me, are you—a respectable man, the father of a family? After swindling me out of my money!

CASALONGA. Swindling? That is no language to use in this house.

VALDIVIESO. I use it where I like.

FLORENCIO. Gentlemen, gentlemen! This is my house, this is the house of my wife!

ZURITA. Valdivieso!

CASALONGA. [*To* FLORENCIO] I choose you for my second. And you too, my friend—what is your name?

VALDIVIESO. But will you listen to him? Do you suppose that I will fight with this rascal, with the first knave who happens along? I, the father of a family?

CASALONGA. I cannot accept your explanation. My friends will confer with yours and apprise us as to the details. Have everything ready for this afternoon.

VALDIVIESO. Do you stand here and sanction this nonsense? You cannot believe one word that he says. No doubt it would be convenient for you to retire and use me as a Turk's head to receive all the blows, when you are the one who ought to fight!

FLORENCIO. Friend Valdivieso, I cannot permit reflections upon my conduct from you. After all, you need not have purchased the book, which you did for money, knowing that it was improper, since it contained matter which was offensive to me.

VALDIVIESO. Are you speaking in earnest?

FLORENCIO. I was never more in earnest in my life.

CASALONGA. Yes, sir, and it is high time for us all to realize that it is in earnest. It was all your fault. Nobody buys without sampling the wares. It was your business to have pointed out to me the indiscretion I was about to commit. [*To* FLORENCIO] I am perfectly willing to withdraw if you wish to fight him, to yield my place as the aggrieved party to you. I should be delighted to act as one of your seconds, with our good friend here—what is your name?

ZURITA. Zurita.

CASALONGA. My good friend Zurita.

VALDIVIESO. Am I losing my mind? This is a trap which you have set for me, a despicable trap!

FLORENCIO. Friend Valdivieso, I cannot tolerate these reflections. I am incapable of setting a trap.

ZURITA. Ah! And so am I! When you entered this house you were familiar with its reputation.

CASALONGA. You have forgotten with whom you are speaking.

VALDIVIESO. Nonsense! This is too much. I wash my hands of the whole business. Is this the spirit in which my advances are received? What I will do now is sell the book —and if I can't sell it, I will give it away! Everybody can read it then—and they can talk as much as they want to. This is the end! I am through.

FLORENCIO. Wait? What was that? I warn you not to sell so much as one copy!

ZURITA. I should be sorry if you did. Take care not to drag me into it.

CASALONGA. Nor me either.

VALDIVIESO. Enough! Do as you see fit—and I shall do the same. This is the end—the absolute end! It is the finish! [*Rushes out.*

FLORENCIO. Stop him!

CASALONGA. It won't be necessary. I shall go to the shop and take back the edition. Whatever you intended to pay him you can hand directly to me. I am your friend; besides I need the money. This man shall not get the best of me. Oh! By the way, what are you doing to-night? Have dinner with me. I shall expect you at the hotel. Don't forget! If you don't show up, I may drop in myself and have dinner with you.

FLORENCIO. No! What would my wife say? She has trouble enough.

CASALONGA. Nonsense! She knows me, and we should have a good laugh. Is she as charming, as good-looking, as

striking as ever? I am keen for her. I don't need to ask whether she is happy. Poor Patricio was a character! What a sight he was! What a figure! And age doubled him for good measure. I'll look in on you later. It has been a rare pleasure this time. There are few friends like you. Come, shake hands! I am touched; you know how it is. See you later! If I don't come back, I have killed my man and am in jail for it. Tell your wife. If I can help out in any way.... Good-by, my friend—ah, yes! Zurita. I have a terrible head to-day. See you later! [*Goes out.*

FLORENCIO. Did you ever see anything equal to it? I never did, and I knew him of old. But he has made progress.

ZURITA. His assurance is fairly epic.

FLORENCIO. What are you going to do with a man who takes it like this? You cannot kill him in cold blood——

CAROLINA *re-enters.*

FLORENCIO. Ah! Carolina! Were you listening? You heard everything.

CAROLINA. Yes, and in spite of it I think he is fascinating.

FLORENCIO. Since Carolina feels that way it simplifies the situation.

ZURITA. Why not? She heard the compliments. The man is irresistible.

FLORENCIO. Carolina, it comes simply to this: nobody attaches any importance to the matter. Only two or three copies have been sold.

CAROLINA. Yes, but one of them was to my sisters-in-law, which is the same as if they had sold forty thousand. They will tell everybody.

FLORENCIO. They were doing it anyhow; there is no further cause for worry.

CAROLINA. At all events, I shall not attend the unveiling to-morrow, and you ought not to go either.

FLORENCIO. But wife!

ZURITA. Ah! The unveiling.... I had forgotten to mention it.

CAROLINA. To mention what?

ZURITA. It has been postponed.

FLORENCIO. How?

ZURITA. The committee became nervous at the last moment over the protests against the nudes. After seeing the photographs many ladies declined to participate. At last the sculptor was convinced, and he has consented to withdraw the statue of Truth altogether, and to put a tunic upon Industry, while Commerce is to have a bathing-suit.

CAROLINA. That will be splendid!

ZURITA. All this, however, will require several days, and by that time everything will have been forgotten.

CASALONGA *re-enters with the books. He is completely out of breath and drops them suddenly upon the floor, where they raise a tremendous cloud of dust.*

CAROLINA. *Ay!*

CASALONGA. I had you scared! At your service.... Here is the entire edition. I returned him his thousand pesetas—I declined to make it another penny. I told you that would be all that was necessary. I am a man of my word. Now it is up to you. No more could be asked! I am your friend and have said enough. I shall have to find some other outlet for my activities. That will be all for to-day.

FLORENCIO. I will give you two thousand pesetas. But beware of a second edition!

CASALONGA. Don't begin to worry so soon. With this money I shall have enough to be decent at least—at least for two months. You know me, señora. I am Florencio's most intimate friend, as I was Patricio's most intimate friend,

which is to say one of the most intimate friends you ever had.

CAROLINA. Yes, I remember.

CASALONGA. But I have changed since that time.

FLORENCIO. Not a bit of it! He is just the same.

CASALONGA. Yes, the change is in you. You are the same, only you have improved. [*To* CAROLINA] I am amazed at the opulence of your beauty, which a fortunate marriage has greatly enhanced. Have you any children?

CAROLINA. No....

CASALONGA. You are going to have some.

FLORENCIO. Flatterer!

CASALONGA. But I must leave before night: there is nothing for me to do here.

FLORENCIO. No, you have attended to everything. I shall send it after you to the hotel.

CASALONGA. Add a little while you are about it to cover expenses—by way of a finishing touch.

FLORENCIO. Oh, very well!

CASALONGA. That will be all. Señora, if I can be of service.... My good Zurita! Friend Florencio! Before I die I hope to see you again.

FLORENCIO. Yes! Unless I die first.

CASALONGA. I know how you feel. You take the worst end for yourself.

FLORENCIO. Allow me that consolation.

CASALONGA. God be with you, my friend. Adios! Rest in peace. How different are our fates! Life to you is sweet. You have everything—love, riches, satisfaction. While I—I laugh through my tears! [*Goes out.*

CAROLINA. That cost you money.

FLORENCIO. What else did you expect? I gave up to avoid a scandal upon your account. I could see that you

were nervous. I would have fought if I could have had my way; I would have carried matters to the last extreme. Zurita will tell you so.

CAROLINA. I always said that monument would cost us dear.

FLORENCIO. Obviously! Two thousand pesetas now, besides the twenty-five thousand which I subscribed for the monument, to say nothing of my uniform as Chief of Staff which I had ordered for the unveiling. Then there are the banquets to the delegates....

ZURITA. Glory is always more expensive than it is worth.

FLORENCIO. It is not safe to be famous even at second hand.

CAROLINA. But you are not sorry?

FLORENCIO. No, my Carolina, the glory of being your husband far outweighs in my eyes the disadvantages of being the husband of his widow.

Curtain

THE BONDS OF INTEREST

COMEDY IN A PROLOGUE AND THREE ACTS

First Presented at the Teatro Lara, Madrid, on the Evening of the Ninth of December, 1907

CHARACTERS

Doña Sirena
Silvia
The Wife of Polichinelle
Columbine
Laura
Risela
Leander
Crispin
The Doctor
Polichinelle
Harlequin
The Captain
Pantaloon
The Innkeeper
The Secretary
1st and 2d Servants at the Inn
1st and 2d Constables

The action takes place in an imaginary country at the beginning of the Seventeenth Century

TO RAFAEL GASSET

THE BONDS OF INTEREST

PROLOGUE

Spoken by CRISPIN

A conventional drop at the front, having a door in the middle, curtained.

Here you have the mummer of the antique farce who enlivened in the country inns the hard-earned leisure of the carter, who made the simple rustics gape with wonder in the square of every rural town and village, who in the populous cities drew about him great bewildering assemblages, as in Paris where Tabarin set up his scaffold on the *Pont-Neuf* and challenged the attention of the passers-by, from the learned doctor pausing a moment on his solemn errand to smooth out the wrinkles on his brow at some merry quip of old-time farce, to the light-hearted cutpurse who there whiled away his hours of ease as he cheated his hunger with a smile, to prelate and noble dame and great grandee in stately carriages, soldier and merchant and student and maid. Men of every rank and condition shared in the rejoicing—men who were never brought together in any other way—the grave laughing to see the laughter of the gay rather than at the wit of the farce, the wise with the foolish, the poor with the rich, so staid and formal in their ordinary aspect, and the rich to see the poor laugh, their consciences a little easier at the thought: "Even the poor can smile." For nothing is so contagious as the sympathy of a smile.

Sometimes our humble farce mounted up to Princes' Pal-

aces on the whims of the mighty and the great; yet there its rogueries were not less free. It was the common heritage of great and small. Its rude jests, its sharp and biting sentences it took from the people, from that lowly wisdom of the poor which knows how to suffer and bear all, and which was softened in those days by resignation in men who did not expect too much of the world and so were able to laugh at the world without bitterness and without hate.

From its humble origins Lope de Rueda and Shakespere and Molière lifted it up, bestowing upon it high patents of nobility, and like enamoured princes of the fairy-tales, elevated poor Cinderella to the topmost thrones of Poetry and of Art. But our farce to-night cannot claim such distinguished lineage, contrived for your amusement by the inquiring spirit of a restless poet of to-day.

This is a little play of puppets, impossible in theme, without any reality at all. You will soon see how everything happens in it that could never happen, how its personages are not real men and women, nor the shadows of them, but dolls or marionettes of paste and cardboard, moving upon wires which are visible even in a little light and to the dimmest eye. They are the grotesque masks of the Italian *Commedia dell'Arte*, not as boisterous as they once were, because they have aged with the years and have been able to think much in so long a time. The author is aware that so primitive a spectacle is unworthy of the culture of these days; he throws himself upon your courtesy and upon your goodness of heart. He only asks that you should make yourselves as young as possible. The world has grown old, but art never can reconcile itself to growing old, and so, to seem young again, it descends to these fripperies. And that is the reason that these outworn puppets have presumed to come to amuse you to-night with their child's play.

THE FIRST ACT

A plaza in a city. The façade of an Inn is at the right, having a practicable door, with a knocker upon it. Above the door is a sign which reads INN.

LEANDER *and* CRISPIN *enter from the left.*

LEANDER. This must be a very great city, Crispin. Its riches and its power appear in everything.

CRISPIN. Yes, there are two cities. Pray God that we have chanced upon the better one!

LEANDER. Two cities do you say, Crispin? Ah! Now I understand—an old city and a new city, one on either side of the river.

CRISPIN. What has the river to do with it, or newness or age? I say two cities just as there are in every city in the world; one for people who arrive with money and the other for persons who arrive like us.

LEANDER. We are lucky to have arrived at all without falling into the hands of Justice. I should be heartily glad to stop here awhile and rest myself, for I am tired of this running about the world so continually.

CRISPIN. Not I! No, it is the natural condition of the free-born subjects of the Kingdom of Roguery, of whom am I, not to remain seated long in any one place, unless it be through compulsion, as to say in the galleys, where, believe me, they are very hard seats. But now since we have happened upon this city, and to all appearances it is a well fortified and provisioned one, let us like prudent captains map out our plan of battle beforehand, if we are to conquer it with any advantage to ourselves.

LEANDER. A pretty army we shall make to besiege it.

CRISPIN. We are men and we have to do with men.

LEANDER. All our wealth is on our backs. You were not willing to take off these clothes and sell them, when by doing so we could easily have obtained money.

CRISPIN. I would sooner take off my skin than my good clothes. As the world goes nothing is so important as appearances, and the clothes, as you must admit, are the first things to appear.

LEANDER. What are we going to do, Crispin? Hunger and fatigue have been too much for me. I am overcome; I cannot talk.

CRISPIN. There is nothing for us to do but to take advantage of our talents and our effrontery, for without effrontery talents are of no use. The best thing, as it seems to me, will be for you to talk as little as possible, but be very impressive when you do, and put on the airs of a gentleman of quality. From time to time then I will permit you to strike me across the back. When anybody asks you a question, reply mysteriously and if you open your mouth upon your own account, be sure that it is with dignity, as if you were pronouncing sentence. You are young; you have a fine presence. Until now you have known only how to dissipate your resources; this is the time for you to begin to profit by them. Put yourself in my hands. There is nothing so useful to a man as to have some one always at his heels to point out his merits, for modesty in one's self is imbecility, while self-praise is madness, and so between the two we come into disfavor with the world. Men are like merchandise; they are worth more or less according to the skill of the salesman who markets them. I tell you, though you were but muddy glass, I will so contrive that in my hands you shall pass for pure diamond. And now let us knock at

the door of this inn, for surely it is the proper thing to have lodgings on the main square.

LEANDER. You say at this inn? But how are we going to pay?

CRISPIN. If we are to be stopped by a little thing like that then we had better search out an asylum or an almshouse or else beg on the streets, if so be that you incline to virtue. Or if to force, then back to the highway and cut the throat of the first passer-by. If we are to live upon our means, strictly speaking, we have no other means to live.

LEANDER. I have letters of introduction to persons of importance in this city, who will be able to lend us aid.

CRISPIN. Then tear those letters up; never think of such baseness again! Introduce yourself to no man when you are in need. Those would be pretty letters of credit indeed! To-day you will be received with the greatest courtesy; they will tell you that their houses and their persons are to be considered as yours. The next time you call, the servant will tell you that his master is not at home. No, he is not expected soon....and at the next visit nobody will trouble so much as to open the door. This is a world of giving and taking, a shop, a mart, a place of exchange, and before you ask you have to offer.

LEANDER. But what can I offer when I have nothing?

CRISPIN. How low an opinion you must have of yourself! Is a man in himself, then, worth nothing? A man may be a soldier, and by his valor win great victories. He may be a husband or a lover, and with love's sweet, oblivious medicine, restore some noble dame to health, or some damsel of high degree, who has been pining away through melancholy. He may be the servant of some mighty and powerful lord, who becomes attached to him and raises him up through his favor, and he may be so many other things besides that I have not

the breath even to begin to run them over. When one wants to climb, why any stair will do.

LEANDER. But if I have not even that stair?

CRISPIN. Then accept my shoulders, and I will lift you up. I offer you the top.

LEANDER. And if we both fall down upon the ground?

CRISPIN. God grant that it may be soft! [*Knocking at the inn-door*] Hello! Ho, within there! Hello, I say, in the inn! Devil of an innkeeper! Does no one answer? What sort of a tavern is this?

LEANDER. Why are you making all this noise when as yet you have scarcely begun to call?

CRISPIN. Because it is monstrous that they should make us wait like this! [*Calling again more loudly*] Hello within! Who's there, I say? Hello in the house! Hello, you thousand devils!

INNKEEPER. [*Within*] Who's there? What knocking and what shouting at my door! Is this the way to stand and wait? Out, I say!

CRISPIN. It is too much! And now he will tell us that this dilapidated old tavern is a fit lodging for a gentleman.

The INNKEEPER *and* TWO SERVANTS *come out of the Inn.*

INNKEEPER. Softly, sirs, softly; for this is not a tavern but an inn, and great gentlemen have been lodged in this house.

CRISPIN. I would like to have seen those same great gentlemen—gentle, a little more or less. What? It is easy enough to see by these rascals that they are not accustomed to waiting on persons of quality. They stand there like blockheads without running to do our service.

INNKEEPER. My life! But you are impertinent!

LEANDER. My servant is a little forward, perhaps. You will find him somewhat hasty in his temper. However, your inn will be good enough for the brief time that we shall be able to remain in it. Prepare an apartment for me and another for my servant, and let us spare these idle words.

INNKEEPER. I beg your pardon, sir. If you had only spoken before.... I don't know how it is, but somehow gentlemen are always so much more polite than their servants.

CRISPIN. The fact is my master is so good-natured that he will put up with anything. But I know what is proper for his service, and I have no mind to wink at villainy. Lead us to our apartments.

INNKEEPER. But where is your luggage?

CRISPIN. Do you suppose that we are carrying our luggage with us on our backs, like a soldier's knapsack, or trundling it like students' bundles in our hands? Know that my master has eight carts coming after him, which will arrive if he stays here long enough, and at that he will only remain for the time which is absolutely necessary to conclude the secret mission with which he has been intrusted in this city.

LEANDER. Will you be silent and hold your tongue? What secret is it possible to keep with you? If I am discovered through your impudence, through your misguided talk.... [*He threatens and strikes* CRISPIN *with his sword.*

CRISPIN. Help! He is killing me! [*Running.*

INNKEEPER. [*Interposing between* LEANDER *and* CRISPIN] Hold, sir!

LEANDER. Let me chastise him! The most intolerable of vices is this desire to talk.

INNKEEPER. Do not beat him, sir!

LEANDER. Let me at him! Let me at him! Will the slave never learn?

As he is about to strike CRISPIN, CRISPIN *runs and hides himself behind the* INNKEEPER, *who receives all the blows.*

CRISPIN. [*Crying out*] Ay! Ay! Ay!

INNKEEPER. Ay, say I! For I got all the blows!

LEANDER. [*To* CRISPIN] Now you see what you have done. This poor man has received all the blows. Down! Down! Beg his pardon!

INNKEEPER. It will not be necessary, sir. I pardon him willingly. [*To the servants*] What are you doing standing there? Prepare the rooms in which the Emperor of Mantua is accustomed to reside when he is stopping in this house, and let dinner be made ready for these gentlemen.

CRISPIN. Perhaps it would be as well if I saw to that myself, otherwise they may delay and spoil everything, and commit a thousand blunders for which I shall be held responsible, for my master, as you see, is not a man to submit to insult. I am with you, sirrahs—and remember who it is you serve, for the greatest good fortune or the direst calamity in the world enters at this moment behind you through these doors.

The servants, followed by CRISPIN, *re-enter the Inn.*

INNKEEPER. [*To* LEANDER] Will you be good enough to let me have your name, where you come from, and the business which brings you to this city?

LEANDER. [*Seeing* CRISPIN *re-enter from the Inn*] My servant will let you have them. Learn not to bother me with foolish questions. [*He goes into the Inn.*

CRISPIN. What have you done now? You have not dared to question my master? If you want to keep him so much

as another hour in your house, never speak to him again. No! Not one word!

INNKEEPER. But the laws are very strict. It is absolutely necessary that the questions should be answered. The law in this city——

CRISPIN. Never mention the law to my master! Silence! Silence! And for shame! You do not know whom you have in your house; no, and if you did, you would not be wasting your time on these impertinences.

INNKEEPER. But am I not to be told at least——

CRISPIN. Bolt of Heaven! Silence! Or I will call my master, and he will tell you whatever he sees fit—and then you will not understand. Take care! Look to it that he wants for nothing! Wait on him with every one of your five senses, or you will have good reason to regret it! Have you no knowledge of men? Can't you read character? Don't you see who my master is? What? How is that? What do you say? No reply?.... Come! Come!.... In!....

He goes into the Inn, pushing the INNKEEPER *before him. The* CAPTAIN *and* HARLEQUIN *enter from the left.*

HARLEQUIN. As we return from the fields which surround this fair city—and beyond a doubt they are the best part of it—it seems that without intending it we have happened upon this Inn. What a creature of habit is man! And surely it is a vile habit, this being obliged to eat every day.

CAPTAIN. The sweet music of your verses had quite deprived me of all thought. Delightful privilege of the poet!

HARLEQUIN. Which does not prevent him from being equally lacking upon his own part. The poet wants everything. I approach this Inn with fear. Will they consent to trust us to-day? If not, we must rely upon your sword.

CAPTAIN. My sword? The soldier's sword, like the poet's lyre, is little valued in this city of merchants and traders. We have fallen upon evil days.

HARLEQUIN. We have. Sublime poesy, which sings of great and glorious exploits, is no more. It is equally profitless to offer your genius to the great to praise or to lampoon them. Flattery and satire are both alike to them. They neither thank you for the one nor fear the other, nor do they read them. Aretino himself would have starved to death in these days.

CAPTAIN. But tell me, how is it with us? What is the position of the soldier? Because we were defeated in the late wars—more through these base traffickers who govern us and send us to defend their interests without enthusiasm and without arms, than through any power of the enemy, as if a man could fight with his whole heart for what he did not love—defeated by these traffickers who did not contribute so much as a single soldier to our ranks or lend one single penny to the cause but upon good interest and yet better security; who, as soon as they scented danger and saw their pockets in jeopardy, threatened to make common cause with the enemy—now they blame us, they abuse us and despise us, and seek to economize out of our martial misery, which is the little pay that they give us, and would dismiss us if they dared, if they were not afraid that some day all those whom they have oppressed by their tyranny and their greed would rise up and turn against them. And woe to them when they do, if we remember that day on which side lie duty and justice!

HARLEQUIN. When that day comes you will find us at your side.

CAPTAIN. Poets cannot be depended upon for anything. Your spirits are like the opal, which looks different in every

light. You are in an ecstasy to-day over what is about to be born, and to-morrow over what is in the last stages of dissolution. You have a special weakness for falling in love with ruins, which to my mind is a melancholy thing. And since as a rule you sit up all night, you more often see the sun set than the day break; you know more about going down than you do of rising.

HARLEQUIN. That cannot truthfully be said of me. I have often seen the sun rise when I had no place to lay my head. Besides, how can you expect a man to hail the day as blithely as the lark when it always breaks so unfortunately for him?—What say you? Shall we try our fate?

CAPTAIN. It cannot be avoided. Be seated, and let us await what our good host has in store.

HARLEQUIN. [*Calling into the Inn*] Hello, there! Ho! Who serves to-day?

The INNKEEPER *enters.*

INNKEEPER. Ah, gentlemen! Is it you? I am sorry, but there is no entertainment at the Inn to-day.

CAPTAIN. And for what reason, if it is proper to ask the question?

INNKEEPER. A proper question for you to ask. Do you suppose that I trust nobody for what is consumed in this house?

CAPTAIN. Ah! Is that the reason? And are we not persons of credit, who are to be trusted?

INNKEEPER. No; not by me. And as I never expect to collect anything, you have had all that courtesy requires out of me already. This being the case, you will be so kind as to remove yourselves from my door.

HARLEQUIN. Do you imply that there is nothing to be counted between us but money? Are all the praises that we have lavished upon your house in all parts of the coun-

try to go for nothing? I have even composed a sonnet in your honor, in which I celebrate the virtues of your stewed partridges and hare pie! And as for my friend, the Captain, you may rest assured that he alone would uphold the reputation of your hostelry against an army. Is that a feat which is worth nothing? Is there nothing but clinking of coins in your ears?

INNKEEPER. I am not in a jesting mood; it does not suit my humor. I want none of your sonnets, nor the Captain's sword either, which might better be employed in other business.

CAPTAIN. Name of Mars! You are right. Better employed upon an impudent rascal's back, flaying off his hide!

[Threatening him and striking him with his sword.

INNKEEPER. [*Crying out*] What? How is this? You strike me? Help! Justice!

HARLEQUIN. [*Restraining the* CAPTAIN] Don't run your head into a noose on account of such a worthless scamp.

CAPTAIN. I shall kill him. *[Striking him.*

INNKEEPER. Help! Justice!

The TWO SERVANTS *enter, running, from the Inn.*

SERVANTS. They are killing our master!

INNKEEPER. Save me!

CAPTAIN. Not one of them shall remain alive!

INNKEEPER. Will no one come?

CRISPIN *and* LEANDER *enter.*

LEANDER. What is this brawl?

CRISPIN. In the presence of my master? Before the house where he resides? Is there no rest possible, nor quiet? Hold! Or I shall summon Justice. Order! Quiet!

INNKEEPER. This will be the ruin of me! With such a dignitary stopping in my house!——

HARLEQUIN. Who is he?

INNKEEPER. Never dare to ask me his name!

CAPTAIN. Your pardon, sir, if we have disturbed your rest, but this rascally villain——

INNKEEPER. It wasn't my fault, my lord. These unblushing scoundrels——

CAPTAIN. What? I? Unblushing—I? I can bear no more!

CRISPIN. Hold, sir Captain, for one is here who is able to redress your wrongs, if so be you have had them of this man.

INNKEEPER. Consider, sir, that for more than a month these fellows have eaten at my expense without the payment of one penny—without so much as the thought of payment; and now because I refuse to serve them to-day, they turn upon me.

HARLEQUIN. I do not turn because I am accustomed to face that which is unpleasant.

CAPTAIN. Is it reasonable that a soldier should not be given credit?

HARLEQUIN. Is it reasonable that a sonnet should be allowed to pass for nothing, although it is written with the best of flourishes in praise of his stewed partridges and hare pies? And all this upon credit on my part, for I have never tasted one of them, but only his eternal mutton and potatoes.

CRISPIN. These two noble gentlemen are right. It is infamous that a poet and a soldier should be denied in this manner.

HARLEQUIN. Ah, sir! You have a great soul!

CRISPIN. No, I have not—but my master, who is here present. Being a grand gentleman, there is nothing which appeals to him so much in the world as a poet or a soldier.

LEANDER. To be sure. I agree with you.

CRISPIN. You need have no doubt but that while he re-

mains in this city you will be treated with the consideration you deserve. You shall want for nothing. Whatever expense you may be at in this Inn, is to be placed upon his account.

LEANDER. To be sure. I agree with you.

CRISPIN. And let the landlord look to it that you get your deserts!

INNKEEPER. Sir! ....

CRISPIN. And don't be so stingy with those partridges and hairy pies. It is not proper that a poet like Signor Harlequin should be obliged to draw upon his imagination in his descriptions of such material things.

HARLEQUIN. What? Do you know my name?

CRISPIN. No, I do not; but my master, being such a great gentleman, knows all the poets who exist or who ever did exist in the world, provided always that they were worthy of the name.

LEANDER. To be sure. I agree with you.

CRISPIN. And none of them is more famous than you, Signor Harlequin. Whenever I consider that you have not been treated here with the respect which is your due——

INNKEEPER. Your pardon, sir. They shall be made welcome, as you desire. It is sufficient that you should be their security.

CAPTAIN. Sir, if I can be of service to you in any way....

CRISPIN. What? Is it a small service to be permitted to know you? O glorious Captain, worthy only to be sung by this immortal poet!

HARLEQUIN. Sir!

CAPTAIN. Sir!

HARLEQUIN. So my verses are known to you?

CRISPIN. How? Known? And if known would it ever

be possible to forget them? Is not that wonderful sonnet yours, which begins:

"The soft hand which caresses and which slays"....

HARLEQUIN. What?

CRISPIN. What?

"The soft hand which caresses and which slays"....

It does not say what.

HARLEQUIN. Nonsense! No, that is not my sonnet.

CRISPIN. Then it is worthy of being yours. And you, Captain! Who is not familiar with your marvellous exploits? Was it not you who, alone, with twenty men, assaulted the Castle of the Red Rock in the famous battle of the Black Field?

CAPTAIN. You know, then?

CRISPIN. How?.... Do I know? Oh! Many a time, transported, I have listened to my master recount the story of your prowess! Twenty men, twenty, and you in front of them, and in front of you the castle. Boom! Boom! Boom! from the castle, shots and bombards, darts and flaming squibs and boiling oil! And the twenty men all standing there like one man, and you in front of them! And from above: Boom! Boom! Boom! And the roll of the drums: Rum-a-tum-tum! And the blare of the trumpets: Tara! Tara-ra! And you all the while there alone with your sword: Swish! Swish! Swish! A blow here, a blow there. Or without your sword.... Above, below.... A head, an arm....

He begins to rain blows about him right and left, and to kick, using his fists, his feet, and the flat side of his sword indifferently.

SERVANTS. Ay! Ay! Oh! Oh!

INNKEEPER. Hold! Hold! Restrain yourself! You don't know what you are doing. You are all excited.... It is as if the battle were really taking place....

CRISPIN. How? I am excited? Know that I always feel in my breast the *animus belli*, the thirst for war!

CAPTAIN. It seems almost as if you must have been there.

CRISPIN. To hear my master describe it is the same as being there. No, it is preferable to it. And is such a soldier, the hero of the Red Rocks in the Black Fields, to be insulted thus? Ah! How fortunate it is that my master was present, and that important business had brought him to this city, for he will see to it that you are accorded the consideration you deserve. So sublime a poet, so great a captain!.... [*To the servants*] Quick! What are you doing there? Bring the best food that you have in the house and set it before these gentlemen. And first of all get a bottle of good wine; it will be a rare pleasure to my master to drink with them. He will esteem himself indeed fortunate. Don't stand there and stare! Quick! Bestir yourselves!

INNKEEPER. Run, run! I go.... We are getting something out of this after all.

The INNKEEPER *and the* TWO SERVANTS *run into the Inn.*

HARLEQUIN. Ah, sir! How can we ever repay you?

CAPTAIN. How? We certainly never shall....

CRISPIN. Let nobody speak of payment before my master. The very thought gives offense. Be seated, be seated. My master, who has wined and dined so many princes, so many noblemen at his table, will deem this an even greater pleasure.

LEANDER. To be sure. I agree with you.

CRISPIN. My master is not a man of many words; but, as

you see, the few that he does speak, are, as it were, fraught with wisdom.

HARLEQUIN. His grandeur appears in everything.

CAPTAIN. You have no idea what a comfort it is to our drooping spirits to find a noble gentleman like you who condescends to treat us with consideration.

CRISPIN. Why, this is nothing to what he will condescend to do! I know that my master will never rest satisfied to stop at such a trifle. He will elevate you to his own level, and then hold you up beside him on the same exalted plane. He is just that kind of a man.

LEANDER. [*To* CRISPIN] Don't let your tongue run away with you, Crispin.

CRISPIN. My master is averse to foolish talk; but you will soon know him by his deeds.

The INNKEEPER *and the* SERVANTS *re-enter, bringing wine and provisions which they place upon the table.*

INNKEEPER. Here is the wine—and the dinner.

CRISPIN. Drink, drink and eat! See that they want for nothing; my master is agreeable. He will be responsible. His responsibility is fortunately not in question. If you would like anything you don't see, don't hesitate to ask for it. My master will order it. And let the landlord look to it that it is brought promptly, for verily at this business, he is the sorriest kind of a knave.

INNKEEPER. To be sure. . . . I don't agree with you.

CRISPIN. Not another word! You insult my master.

CAPTAIN. Your very good health!

LEANDER. Your good healths, gentlemen! To the health of the greatest poet and the best soldier in the world!

HARLEQUIN. To the health of the noblest gentleman!

CAPTAIN. The most liberal and the most generous!

CRISPIN. In the world! Excuse me, but I must drink

too, though it may seem presumptuous. But on a day like this, this day of days, which has brought together the sublimest poet, the bravest captain, the noblest gentleman, and the most faithful servant in the universe.... [*They drink*] Now you will permit my master to retire. The important business which brings him to the city admits of no further delay.

LEANDER. To be sure.

CRISPIN. You will not fail to return every day and present your respects to him?

HARLEQUIN. Every hour! And I am going to bring with me all the poets and all the musicians of my acquaintance, to serenade him with music and songs.

CAPTAIN. I shall bring my whole company with me with torches and banners.

LEANDER. You will offend my modesty.

CRISPIN. And now eat, drink! Mind you, sirrahs! About it! Quick! Serve these gentlemen. [*To the* CAPTAIN] A word in your ear. Are you out of money?

CAPTAIN. What shall I say?

CRISPIN. Say no more. [*To the* INNKEEPER] Eh! This way! Let these gentlemen have forty or fifty crowns on my master's account, as a present from him. Omit nothing! See that they are satisfied.

INNKEEPER. Don't worry, sir. Forty or fifty, did you say?

CRISPIN. While you are about it, better make it sixty. Your health, gentlemen!

CAPTAIN. Long life to the noblest gentleman in the world!

HARLEQUIN. Long life!

CRISPIN. Shout long life, too, you uncivil people.

INNKEEPER AND SERVANTS. Long life! Long life!

CRISPIN. Long life to the sublimest poet and the best soldier in the world!

ALL. Long life!

LEANDER. [*To* CRISPIN] Are you mad, Crispin? What are you doing? How are we ever going to get out of this?

CRISPIN. The same way that we got in. You see now poesy and arms are ours. On! We shall achieve the conquest of the world!

All exchange bows and salutations, after which LEANDER *and* CRISPIN *go out upon the left, as they came in. The* CAPTAIN *and* HARLEQUIN *attack the dinner which is set before them by the* INNKEEPER *and the* SERVANTS, *who wait upon them assiduously with anticipation of their every want.*

Curtain

THE SECOND ACT

A garden with the façade of a pavilion opening upon it. DOÑA SIRENA *and* COLUMBINE *enter from the pavilion.*

SIRENA. Is it not enough to deprive a woman of her five senses, Columbine? Can it be possible that a lady should see herself placed in so embarrassing a position and by low, unfeeling people? How did you ever dare to show yourself in my presence with such a tale?

COLUMBINE. But sooner or later wouldn't you have had to know it?

SIRENA. I had rather have died first. But did they all say the same?

COLUMBINE. All, one after the other, exactly as I have told it to you. The tailor absolutely refuses to send you the gown until you have paid him everything that you owe.

SIRENA. Impudent rascal! Everything that I owe *him*. The barefaced highwayman! And does he not stand indebted for his reputation and his very credit in this city to me? Until I employed him in the decoration of my person he did not know, so to speak, what it was to dress a lady.

COLUMBINE. All the cooks and musicians and servants say the same. They refuse to play to-night or to appear at the fête unless they are all paid beforehand.

SIRENA. The rogues! The brood of vipers! Whence does such insolence spring? Were these people not born to serve? Are they to be paid nowadays in nothing but money? Is money the only thing which has value in the world? Woe unto her who is left without a husband to look after her, as I am, without male relatives, alas, without any mas-

culine connection! A woman by herself is worth nothing in the world, be she never so noble or virtuous. O day foretold of the Apocalypse! Surely Antichrist has come!

COLUMBINE. I never saw you so put out before. I hardly know you. You have always been able to rise above these calamities.

SIRENA. Those were other days, Columbine. Then I had my youth to count on, and my beauty, as powerful allies. Princes and great grandees cast themselves at my feet.

COLUMBINE. But on the other hand you did not have the experience and knowledge of the world which you have now. And as far as beauty is concerned, surely you never shone with such refulgence as to-day—that is, if you will listen to me.

SIRENA. Don't attempt to flatter me. Do you suppose that I should ever have got myself into such a fix if I had been the Doña Sirena of my twenties?

COLUMBINE. Your twenty suitors?

SIRENA. What do you think? I had no end of suitors. And you who have not yet begun upon twenty, you have not the sense to perceive what that means and to profit by it. I would never have believed it possible. Otherwise should I have adopted you for my niece if I had, though I saw myself abandoned by every man in the world and reduced to live alone with a maid servant? If instead of wasting your youth on this impecunious Harlequin, this poet who can bring you nothing but ballads and verses, you had had the sense to make a proper use of your time, we should not be languishing now in this humiliating dilemma.

COLUMBINE. What do you expect? I am too young to resign myself to being loved without loving. If I am ever to become skilful in making others suffer for love of me, surely I must learn first what it is one suffers when one loves.

And when I do, I am positive I shall be able to profit by it. I have not yet turned twenty, but you must not think because of that I have so little sense as to marry Harlequin.

SIRENA. I would not trust you. You are capricious, flighty, and allow yourself to be run away with by your imagination. But first let us consider what is to be done. How are we to extricate ourselves from this horrible dilemma? In a short time the guests will arrive—all persons of quality and importance, and among them Signor Polichinelle and his wife and daughter, who, for various reasons, are of more account to me than the rest. You know my house has been frequented of late by several noble gentlemen, somewhat frayed in their nobility, it is true, as I am, through want of means. For any one of them, the daughter of Signor Polichinelle, with her rich dowry and the priceless sum which she will inherit upon her father's death, would be an untold treasure. She has many suitors, but I interpose my influence with Signor Polichinelle and with his wife in favor of them all. Whichever one should be fortunate I know that he will requite my good offices with his bounty, because I have made them all sign an agreement which assures me of it. I have no other means than this to repair my state. If now some rich merchant or some trader by some lucky chance should fall in love with you.... Ah, who can say? This house might become again what it was in other days. But if the insolence of these people breaks out to-night, if I cannot give the fête.... No! I cannot think of it! It would be the death of me!

COLUMBINE. Do not trouble yourself, Doña Sirena. We have enough in the house to provide the entertainment. As for the music and the servants, Signor Harlequin will be able to supply them—he is not a poet and in love with me for nothing. Many singers and choice spirits of his acquain-

tance will willingly lend themselves to any adventure. You will see that nothing will be lacking, and your guests will all say that they have never been present at so marvellous a fête in their lives.

SIRENA. Ah, Columbine! If that could only be, how greatly you would rise in my estimation! Run, run and seek out your poet.... There is no time to lose.

COLUMBINE. My poet? Surely he is walking up and down now on the other side of the garden, waiting for a sign.

SIRENA. I fear it would not be proper for me to be present at your interview. I ought not to demean myself by soliciting his favors. I leave all that to you. Let nothing be wanting at the fête and you shall be well repaid, for these terrible straits through which we are passing to-night cannot continue forever—or else I am not Doña Sirena!

COLUMBINE. All will be well. Have no fear.

DOÑA SIRENA *goes out through the pavilion.*

COLUMBINE. [*Stepping toward the right and calling*] Harlequin! Harlequin! [CRISPIN *enters*] It isn't he!

CRISPIN. Be not afraid, beautiful Columbine, mistress of the mightiest poet, who yet has not been able to heighten in his verses the splendors of your charm. If the picture must always be different from reality, the advantage in this case is all on the side of reality. You can imagine, no doubt, what the picture must have been.

COLUMBINE. Are you a poet, too, or only a courtier and a flatterer?

CRISPIN. I am the best friend of your lover Harlequin, although I only met him to-day; but he has had ample proof of my friendship in this brief time. My greatest desire has been to salute you, and Signor Harlequin would not have been the poet that I take him for, had he not trusted

to my friendship implicitly. But for his confidence I should have been in danger of falling in love with you simply upon the opportunity which he has afforded me of seeing you.

COLUMBINE. Signor Harlequin trusted as much in my love as he did to your friendship. Don't take so much credit to yourself. It is as foolish to trust a man while he lives as a woman while she loves.

CRISPIN. Now I see that you are not so fatal to the sight as to the ear.

COLUMBINE. Pardon me. Before the fête to-night I must speak with Signor Harlequin, and....

CRISPIN. It will not be necessary. That is why I have come, a poor ambassador from him and from my master, who stoops to kiss your hand.

COLUMBINE. Who is your master, if I may ask that question?

CRISPIN. The noblest and most powerful gentleman in the world. Permit me for the present not to mention his name. Soon it will be known. My master desires to salute Doña Sirena and to be present at her fête to-night.

COLUMBINE. At her fête? Don't you know....

CRISPIN. I know everything. That is my business—to investigate. I know that there were certain inconveniences which threatened to becloud it; but there will be none. Everything is provided for.

COLUMBINE. What! Then you do know?

CRISPIN. I assure you everything is provided for—a sumptuous reception, lights and fireworks, musicians and sweet song. It will be the most brilliant fête which ever was in the world.

COLUMBINE. Ah, then you are an enchanter?

CRISPIN. Now you begin to know me. But I shall only tell you that I do not bring good fortune with me for nothing.

The people of this city are so intelligent that I am sure they will be incapable of frowning upon it and discouraging it with foolish scruples when they see it arrive. My master knows that Signor Polichinelle and his only daughter, the beautiful Silvia, the richest heiress in the city, are to be present at the fête to-night. My master has to fall in love with her, my master has to marry her; and my master will know how to requite in fitting fashion the good offices of Doña Sirena and of yourself in the matter, if so be that you do him the honor to assist in his suit.

COLUMBINE. Your speech is impertinent. Such boldness gives offense.

CRISPIN. Time presses and I have no leisure to pay compliments.

COLUMBINE. If the master is to be judged by the man....

CRISPIN. Reassure yourself. You will find my master the most courteous, the most affable gentleman in the world. My effrontery permits him to be modest. The hard necessities of life sometimes compel the noblest cavalier to descend to the devices of the ruffian, just as sometimes they oblige the noblest ladies, in order to maintain their state, to stoop to menial tricks, and this mixture of ruin and nobility in one person is out of harmony with nature. It is better to divide among two persons that which is usually found confused clumsily and joined in one. My master and myself, as being one person, are each a part of the other. Would it could be always so! We have all within ourselves a great and splendid gentleman of lofty hopes and towering ideals, capable of everything that is noble and everything that is good—and by his side, a humble servant born to forlorn hopes and miserable and hidden things, who employs himself in the base actions to which we are enforced by life. The art of living is so to separate the two that when we

fall into any ignominy we can say: "It was not my fault; it was not I. It was my servant." In the greatest misery to which we sink there is always something in us which rises superior to ourselves. We should despise ourselves too much if we did not believe that we were better than our lives. Of course you know who my master is: he is the one of the towering thoughts, of the lofty, beautiful ideals. Of course you know who I am: I am the one of the forlorn and hidden things, the one who grovels and toils on the ground, delving among falsehood and humiliation and lies. Only there is something in me which redeems me and elevates me in my own eyes. It is the loyalty of my service, this loyalty which humiliates and abases itself that another may fly, that he may always be the lord of the towering thoughts, of the lofty, beautiful ideals.

Music is heard in the distance.

COLUMBINE. What is this music?

CRISPIN. The music which my master is bringing with him to the fête with all his pages and all the attendants of his train, accompanied by a great court of poets and singers presided over by Signor Harlequin, and an entire legion of soldiers with the Captain at their head, illuminating his coming with torches, with rockets and red fire.

COLUMBINE. Who is your master, that he is able to do so much? I run to tell my lady....

CRISPIN. It will not be necessary. She is here.

DOÑA SIRENA *enters from the pavilion.*

SIRENA. What is this? Who has prepared this music? What troop of people is arriving at my door?

COLUMBINE. Ask no questions. Know that to-day a great gentleman has arrived in this city, and it is he who offers you this fête to-night. His servant will tell you everything. I hardly know myself whether I have been talking

to a great rogue or a great madman. Whichever it is, I assure you that he is a most extraordinary man.

SIRENA. Then it is not Harlequin?

COLUMBINE. Ask no questions. It is all a work of magic!

CRISPIN. Doña Sirena, my master begs permission to kiss your hand. So great a lady and so noble a gentleman ought not, when they meet, to descend to indignities inappropriate to their state. That is why, before he arrives, I have come to tell you everything. I am acquainted with a thousand notable exploits of your history, which should I but refer to them, would be sufficient to assure me attention. But it might seem impertinence to mention them. [*Handing her a paper*] My master acknowledges in this paper over his signature the great sum which he will be in your debt should you be able to fulfil upon your part that which he has here the honor to propose.

SIRENA. What paper and what debt is this? [*Reading the paper to herself*] How? A hundred thousand crowns at once and an equal quantity upon the death of Signor Polichinelle, if your master succeeds in marrying his daughter? What insolence and what infamy have we here? And to a lady! Do you know to whom you are speaking? Do you know what house this is?

CRISPIN. Doña Sirena! Forego your wrath. There is nobody present to warrant such concern. Put that paper away with the others, and let us not refer to the matter again. My master proposes nothing which is improper to you, nor would you consent that he should do so. Whatever may happen hereafter will be the work of chance and of love. I, the servant, was the one who set this unworthy snare. You are ever the noble dame, my master the virtuous cavalier, and as you meet in this festival to-night, you will talk of a thousand gallant and priceless things, as

your guests stroll by and whisper enviously in praise of the ladies' beauty and the exquisite artfulness of their dress, the splendor and magnificence of the entertainment, the sweetness of the music, the nimble grace of the dancers' feet. And who is to say that this is not the whole story? Is not life just this—a fête in which the music serves to cover up the words, the words to cover up the thoughts? Then let the music sound, let conversation flash and sparkle with its smiles, let the supper be well served—this is all that concerns the guests. See, here is my master, who comes to salute you in all courtesy.

LEANDER, HARLEQUIN, *and the* CAPTAIN *enter from the right.*

LEANDER. Doña Sirena, I kiss your hand.

SIRENA. Sir....

LEANDER. My servant has already told you in my name much more than I myself could say.

CRISPIN. Being a gentleman of discretion, my master is a man of few words. His admiration is mute.

HARLEQUIN. He wisely knows how to admire.

CAPTAIN. True merit.

HARLEQUIN. True valor.

CAPTAIN. The divine art of poesy.

HARLEQUIN. The incomparable science of war.

CAPTAIN. His greatness appears in everything!

HARLEQUIN. He is the noblest gentleman in the world.

CAPTAIN. My sword shall always be at his service.

HARLEQUIN. I shall dedicate my greatest poem to his glory.

CRISPIN. Enough! Enough! You will offend his native modesty. See how he tries to hide himself and slip away. He is a violet.

SIRENA. Surely he has no need to speak for himself who can make others talk like this in his praise.

After bows and salutations the men all withdraw upon the right, DOÑA SIRENA *and* COLUMBINE *remaining alone.*

SIRENA. What do you think of this, Columbine?

COLUMBINE. I think that the master is most attractive in his figure and the servant most captivating in his impertinence.

SIRENA. We shall take advantage of them both. For either I know nothing of the world or about men, or else fortune this day has set her foot within my doors.

COLUMBINE. Surely then it must be fortune, for you do know something of the world, and about men—what don't you know!

SIRENA. Here are Risela and Laura, the first to arrive.

COLUMBINE. When were they the last at anything? I leave them to you; I must not lose sight of our cavalier.

She goes out to the right. LAURA *and* RISELA *enter.*

SIRENA. My dears! Do you know, I was beginning to worry already for fear that you would not come?

LAURA. What? Is it really so late?

SIRENA. Naturally it is late before I worry about you.

RISELA. We were obliged to disappoint at two other fêtes so as not to miss yours.

LAURA. Though we understood that you might not be able to give it to-night. We heard that you were indisposed.

SIRENA. If only to rebuke gossipers I should have given it though I had died.

RISELA. And we should have been present at it even though we had died.

LAURA. But of course you have not heard the news?

RISELA. Nobody is talking of anything else.

LAURA. A mysterious personage has arrived in the city. Some say that he is a secret ambassador from Venice or from France.

RISELA. Others say that he has come to seek a wife for the Grand Turk.

LAURA. They say he is beautiful as an Adonis.

RISELA. If we could only manage to meet him!—What a pity! You ought to have invited him to your fête.

SIRENA. It was not necessary, my dears. He himself sent an ambassador begging permission to come. He is now in my house, and I have not the slightest doubt but that you will be talking to him soon.

LAURA. What is that? I told you that we made no mistake when we came. Something was sure to happen.

RISELA. How we shall be envied to-night!

LAURA. Everybody is mad to know him.

SIRENA. It was no effort for me. It was sufficient for him to hear that I was receiving in my house.

RISELA. Of course—the old story. No person of importance ever arrives in the city, but it seems he runs at once and pays his attentions to you.

LAURA. I am impatient to see him. Lead us to him, on your life!

RISELA. Yes! Take us where he is.

SIRENA. I beg your pardons—Signor Polichinelle arriving with his family. But, my dears, you will not wait. You need no introductions.

RISELA. Certainly not! Come, Laura.

LAURA. Come, Risela, before the crowd grows too great and it is impossible to get near.

LAURA *and* RISELA *go out to the right.* POLICHINELLE, *the* WIFE OF POLICHINELLE, *and* SILVIA *enter.*

SIRENA. O, Signor Polichinelle! I was afraid you were not coming. Until now I really did not know whether or not I was to have a fête!

POLICHINELLE. It was not my fault; it was my wife's. With forty gowns to select from, she can never make up her mind which to put on.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Yes, if I were to please him I should make an exhibition of myself. Any suggestion will do. As it is, you see that I have really not had time to put on anything.

SIRENA. But you never were more beautiful!

POLICHINELLE. Well, she is not displaying one-half of her jewels. If she were, she could not support the weight of the treasure.

SIRENA. Who has a better right to be proud than you have, Signor Polichinelle? What your wife displays are the riches which you have acquired by your labor.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. I tell him this is the time to enjoy them. He ought to be ambitious and seek to rise in the world. Instead, all he thinks about is how he can marry his daughter to some trader.

SIRENA. O, Signor Polichinelle! Your daughter deserves a great deal better than a trader. Surely you hold your daughter far too high for trade. Such a thing is not to be thought of for one moment. You have no right to sacrifice her heart to a bargain. What do you say, Silvia?

POLICHINELLE. She would prefer some waxed-up dandy. Instead of listening to my advice, she reads novels and poetry. It disgusts me.

SILVIA. I always do as my father says, unless it is displeasing to my mother or distasteful to me.

SIRENA. You speak very sensibly.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Her father has an idea that there is nothing but money to be had in the world.

POLICHINELLE. I have an idea that without money there is nothing to be had out of the world. Money is the one thing which counts. It buys everything.

SIRENA. Oh, I cannot hear you talk like that! What of virtue, what of intelligence, what of noble blood?

POLICHINELLE. They all have their price. You know it. And nobody knows it better than I do, for I have bought heavily in those lines, and found them reasonable.

SIRENA. O, Signor Polichinelle! You are in a playful humor this evening. You know very well that money will not buy everything, and if your daughter should fall in love with some noble gentleman, you would not dream of attempting to oppose her. I can see that you have a father's heart.

POLICHINELLE. I have. I would do anything for my daughter.

SIRENA. Even ruin yourself?

POLICHINELLE. That would not be anything for my daughter. Why, I would steal first, rob, murder—anything....

SIRENA. I felt sure that you must know some way to recoup yourself. But the fête is crowded already! Come with me, Silvia. I have picked out a handsome gentleman to dance with you. You will make a striking couple—ideal!

All go out upon the right except SIGNOR POLICHINELLE, *who is detained as he is about to do so by* CRISPIN, *who enters and accosts him.*

CRISPIN. Signor Polichinelle! With your permission.... A word with you....

POLICHINELLE. Who calls me? What do you want?

CRISPIN. You don't remember me? It is not surprising.

Time blots out everything, and when what has been blotted out was unpleasant, after a while we do not remember even the blot, but hurry and paint over it with bright colors, like these with which you now hide your capers from the world. Why, when I knew you, Signor Polichinelle, you had hard work to cover your nakedness with a couple of muddy rags!

POLICHINELLE. Who are you and where did you know me?

CRISPIN. I was a mere boy then; you were a grown man. But you cannot have forgotten so soon all those glorious exploits on the high seas, all those victories gained over the Turks, to which we contributed not a little with our heroic strength, both pulling chained at the same noble oar in the same victorious galley?

POLICHINELLE. Impudent scoundrel! Silence, or——

CRISPIN. Or you will do with me as you did with your first master in Naples, or with your first wife in Bologna, or with that usurious Jew in Venice?

POLICHINELLE. Silence! Who are you who know so much and talk so freely?

CRISPIN. I am—what you were. One who will come to be what you are—as you have done. Not with the same violence as you, for these are other days and only madmen commit murder now, and lovers, and poor ignorant wretches who fall armed upon the wayfarer in dark alleys or along the solitary highway. Despicable gallows-birds! Negligible!

POLICHINELLE. What do you want of me? Money, is it not? Well, we can meet again; this is not the place....

CRISPIN. Do not trouble yourself about your money. I only want to be your friend, your ally, as in those days.

POLICHINELLE. What can I do for you?

CRISPIN. Nothing; for to-day I am the one who is going to do for you, and oblige you with a warning. [*Directing him to look off upon the right*] Do you see your daughter there—

how she is dancing with that young gentleman? How coyly she blushes at his gallant compliments! Well, that gentleman is my master.

POLICHINELLE. Your master? Then he must be an adventurer, a rogue, a blackguard, like....

CRISPIN. Like us, you were going to say? No, he is more dangerous than we, because, as you see, he has a fine figure, and there is a mystery and an enchantment in his glance and a sweetness in his voice which go straight to the heart, and which stir it as at the recital of some sad tale. Is not this enough to make any woman fall in love? Never say that I did not warn you. Run and separate your daughter from this man and never permit her to dance with him again, no, nor to speak to him, so long as she shall live.

POLICHINELLE. Do you mean to say that he is your master and is this the way you serve him?

CRISPIN. Are you surprised? Have you forgotten already how it was when you were a servant? And I have not planned to assassinate him yet.

POLICHINELLE. You are right. A master is always despicable. But what interest have you in serving me?

CRISPIN. To come safe into some good port, as we often did when we rowed together at the oar. Then sometimes you used to say to me: "You are stronger than I, row for me." In this galley in which we are to-day, you are stronger than I. Row for me, for your faithful friend of other days, for life is a horrible vile galley and I have rowed so long.

He goes out by the way he came in. DOÑA SIRENA, *the* WIFE OF POLICHINELLE, RISELA, *and* LAURA *re-enter.*

LAURA. Only Doña Sirena could have given such a fête!

RISELA. To-night she has outstripped all the others.

SIRENA. The presence of so distinguished a gentleman was an added attraction.

POLICHINELLE. But Silvia? Where is Silvia? What have you done with my daughter?

SIRENA. Do not disturb yourself, Signor Polichinelle. Your daughter is in excellent hands, and you may rest assured that she will remain in them as long as she is in my house.

RISELA. There were no attentions for any one but her.

LAURA. All the smiles were for her.

RISELA. And all the sighs!

POLICHINELLE. Whose? This mysterious gentleman's? I do not like it. This must stop——

SIRENA. But Signor Polichinelle!

POLICHINELLE. Away! Let me be! I know what I am doing. [*He rushes out.*

SIRENA. What is the matter? What infatuation is this?

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Now you see what sort of man he is. He is going to commit an outrage on that gentleman. He wants to marry his daughter to a trader, does he—a clinker of worthless coin? He wants to make her unhappy for the rest of her life.

SIRENA. No, anything rather than that! Remember—you are her mother and this is the time for you to interpose your authority.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Look! He has spoken to him and the cavalier drops Silvia's hand and retires, hanging his head.

LAURA. And now Signor Polichinelle is attacking your daughter!

SIRENA. Come! Come! Such conduct cannot be tolerated in my house.

RISELA. Signora Polichinelle, in spite of your riches you are an unfortunate woman.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Would you believe it, he even forgets himself so far sometimes as to turn upon me?

LAURA. Is it possible? And are you a woman to submit to that?

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. He makes it up afterward by giving me a handsome present.

SIRENA. Well, there are husbands of my acquaintance who never even think of making up....

They all go out. LEANDER *and* CRISPIN *enter.*

CRISPIN. What is this sadness, this dejection? I expected to find you in better spirits.

LEANDER. I was never unfortunate till now; at least it never mattered to me whether or not I was unfortunate. Let us fly, Crispin, let us fly from this city before any one can discover us and find out who we are.

CRISPIN. If we fly it will be after every one has discovered us and they are running after us to detain us and bring us back in spite of ourselves. It would be most discourteous to depart with such scant ceremony without bidding our attentive friends good-by.

LEANDER. Do not jest, Crispin; I am in despair.

CRISPIN. So you are. And just when our hopes are under fullest sail.

LEANDER. What could you expect? You wanted me to pretend to be in love, but I have not been able to pretend it.

CRISPIN. Why not?

LEANDER. Because I love—I love in spirit and in truth!

CRISPIN. Silvia? Is that what you are complaining about?

LEANDER. I never believed it possible a man could love like this. I never believed that I could ever love. Through all my wandering life along the dusty roads, I was not only

the one who passed, I was the one who fled, the enemy of the harvest and the field, the enemy of man, enemy of sunshine and the day. Sometimes the fruit of the wayside tree, stolen, not given, left some savor of joy on my parched lips, and sometimes, after many a bitter day, resting at night beneath the stars, the calm repose of heaven would invite and soothe me to a dream of something that might be in my life like that calm night sky, brooding infinite over my soul —serene! And so to-night, in the enchantment of this fête, it seemed to me as if there had come a calm, a peace into my life—and I was dreaming! Ah! How I did dream! But to-morrow it will be again the bitter flight with justice at our heels, and I cannot bear that they should take me here where she is, and where she may ever have cause to be ashamed at having known me.

CRISPIN. Why, I thought that you had been received with favor! And I was not the only one who noticed it. Doña Sirena and our good friends, the Captain and the poet, have been most eloquent in your praises. To that rare excellent mother, the Wife of Polichinelle, who thinks of nothing but how she can relate herself by marriage to some nobleman, you have seemed the son-in-law of her dreams. As for Signor Polichinelle....

LEANDER. He knows....he suspects....

CRISPIN. Naturally. It is not so easy to deceive Signor Polichinelle as it is an ordinary man. An old fox like him has to be cheated truthfully. I decided that the best thing for us to do was to tell him everything.

LEANDER. How so?

CRISPIN. Obviously. He knows me of old. When I told him that you were my master, he rightly supposed that the master must be worthy of the man. And upon my part, in appreciation of his confidence, I warned him not to permit

you under any circumstances to come near to or speak with his daughter.

LEANDER. You did? Then what have I to hope?

CRISPIN. You are a fool! Why, that Signor Polichinelle will exert all his authority to prevent you from meeting her.

LEANDER. I do not understand.

CRISPIN. In that way he will become our most powerful ally, for if he opposes it, that will be enough to make his wife take the opposite side, and the daughter will fall in love with you madly. You have no idea what a young and beautiful daughter of a rich father, who has been brought up to the gratification of her every whim, can do when she finds out for the first time in her life that somebody is opposing her wishes. I am certain that this very night, before the fête is over, she will find some way of eluding the vigilance of her father at whatever cost, and return to speak with you.

LEANDER. But can't you see that Signor Polichinelle is nothing to me, no, nor the wide world either? It is she, only she! It is to her that I am unwilling to appear unworthy or mean, it is to her—to her that I cannot lie.

CRISPIN. Bah! Enough of this nonsense! Don't tell me that. It is too late to draw back. Think what will happen if we vacillate now and hesitate in going on. You say that you have fallen in love? Well, this real love will serve us better than if it were put on. Otherwise you would have wanted to get through with it too quickly. If insolence and effrontery are the only qualities which are of use elsewhere, in love a faint suggestion of timidity is of advantage to a man. Timidity in a man always makes the woman bolder. If you don't believe it, here is the innocent Silvia now, skulking in the shadows and only waiting for a chance to come near until I retire or am concealed.

LEANDER. Silvia, do you say?

CRISPIN. Hush! You may frighten her. When she is with you, remember, discretion—only a few words, very few. Adore her, admire her, contemplate her, and let the enchantment of this night of pallid blue speak for you, propitious as it is to love, and whisper to her in the music whose soft notes die away amid the foliage and fall upon our ears like sad overtones of this festival of joy.

LEANDER. Do not trifle, Crispin! Do not trifle with my love! It will be my death.

CRISPIN. Why should I trifle with it? I know, too, it is not always well to grovel on the ground. Sometimes we must soar and mount up into the sky better to dominate the earth. Mount now and soar—and I will grovel still. The world lies in our hands!

He goes out to the right. SILVIA *enters.*

LEANDER. Silvia!

SILVIA. Is it you? You must pardon me. I did not expect to find you here.

LEANDER. I fly from the festival. I am saddened by this joy.

SILVIA. What? You, too?

LEANDER. Too, do you say? Does joy sadden you, too?

SILVIA. My father is angry with me. He never spoke to me like this before. And he was discourteous to you. Will you forgive him?

LEANDER. Yes. I forgive him everything. But you must not make him angry upon my account. Return to the company. They will be looking for you. If they find you here with me....

SILVIA. You are right. But you must come, too. Why should you be so sad?

LEANDER. No, I must slip away without anybody seeing me, without their knowing I am gone. I must go far away.

SILVIA. What? But you have important business in the city. I know you have.... You will have to stay a long, long time.

LEANDER. No, no! Not another day, not another hour!

SILVIA. But then.... You have not lied to me?

LEANDER. Lied? No! Don't say that I have lied! No; this is the one truth of my whole life—this dream from which there should be no awakening!

The music of a song is heard in the distance, continuing until the curtain falls.

SILVIA. It is Harlequin, singing.... What is the matter? You are crying. Is it the music which makes you cry? Why will you not tell me what it is that makes you cry?

LEANDER. What makes me cry? The song will tell you. Listen to the song!

SILVIA. We can hear only the music; the words are lost, it is so far away. But don't you know it? It is a song to the silence of the night. It is called the "Kingdom of the Soul." You must know it.

LEANDER. Say it over to me.

SILVIA:

The amorous night above the silent lover
Across the blue heaven spreads a nuptial veil.
The night has strewn its diamonds on the cover
Of a moonlit sky in drowsy August pale.
The garden in the shade now knows no color,
Deep in the shadow of its obscurity
Lightly the leaflets flutter, sweetly smells the flower,
And love broods there in silent sympathy.

You voices which sigh, you voices which sing,
You voices which whisper sweet phrases of love,
Intruders you are and a blasphemous thing,

Like an oath at night-tide in a prayer sped above.
Great Spirit of Silence, whom I adore,
There is in your silence the ineffable voice
Of those who have died loving in silence of yore,
Of those who were silent and died of their love;
Of those in their lives whose great love was such
They were unable to tell it, their love was so much!
Yours are the voices which nightly I hear,
Whispers of love and eternity near.

Mother of my soul, the light of this star,
Is it not the light of your eyes,
Which, like a drop of God's blood,
Trembles in the night
And fades at sunrise?
Tell him whom I love, I never shall love
More than him on the earth,
And when he fades away, light of my eyes,
I shall kiss at sunrise
But the light of thy star!

LEANDER:

Mother of my soul, I never have loved
More than you on the earth.
And when you fade away, light of my eyes,
I shall kiss at sunrise
The light of thy star.

They remain in silence, embracing and gazing into each other's eyes.

CRISPIN. [*Who appears at the right—to himself*]

Poesy and night and madness of the lover....
All has to serve us that to our net shall come.

The victory is sure! Courage, charge and over!
Who shall overcome us when love beats the drum?

SILVIA *and* LEANDER *move slowly off to the right, locked in each other's arms.* CRISPIN *follows them in silence, without being seen. Slowly the*

Curtain Descends

THE THIRD ACT

A room in LEANDER'S *house.*
CRISPIN, *the* CAPTAIN, *and* HARLEQUIN *enter from the right.*

CRISPIN. Enter, gentlemen, and be seated. Will you take something? Let me give orders to have it brought. Hello there! Ho!

CAPTAIN. No! By no means! We can accept nothing.

HARLEQUIN. We came merely to offer our services to your master after what we have just heard.

CRISPIN. Incredible treachery, which, believe me, shall not be suffered to remain unpunished! I promise you if Signor Polichinelle ever puts himself within the reach of my hands——

HARLEQUIN. Ah! Now you see what an advantage is possessed by us poets! I have him always within the reach of my verses. Oh! What a terrible satire I am thinking of writing against him! The cutthroat! Old reprobate!

CAPTAIN. But you say your master was not so much as even wounded?

CRISPIN. It might have killed him just the same. Imagine! Set upon by a dozen ruffians absolutely without warning.... Thanks, though, to his bravery, to his skill, to my cries....

HARLEQUIN. Do you say that it happened at night as your master was talking to Silvia over the wall of her garden?

CRISPIN. Naturally, my master had already been advised of what might happen. But you know what sort of man he is. He is not a person to be deterred by anything.

CAPTAIN. He ought to have notified us, however.

HARLEQUIN. He ought, certainly, to have notified the

Captain. He would have been delighted to have lent his aid.

Crispin. You know what my master is. He is a host in himself.

Captain. But you say that he caught one of the ruffians by the nape of the neck, and the rascal confessed that it had all been planned and arranged by Signor Polichinelle beforehand so as to rid himself of your master?

Crispin. Who else could have had any interest in it? His daughter is in love with my master; her father wants to marry her to suit himself. My master is opposing his plans, and Signor Polichinelle has known all his life how to get rid of disturbances. Didn't he become a widower twice in a very short time? Hasn't he inherited all that his relatives had, irrespective of age, whether they were older or younger than he? Everybody knows it; nobody will say that I do him injustice. Ah! the riches of Signor Polichinelle are an affront to our intelligence, a discouragement to honest labor. A man like Signor Polichinelle could remain rich only among a base and degenerate people.

Harlequin. I agree with you. I intend to say all this in my satire—of course, without mentioning names. Poetry does not admit of such license.

Crispin. Much good, then, your satire will do!

Captain. Leave him to me! Leave him to me! I promise you if he once puts himself within the reach of my sword—ah! But I am confident that he never will.

Crispin. My master would never consent to have an insult offered to Signor Polichinelle. After all, he is Silvia's father. The point is to let people in the city understand that an attempt has been made to assassinate my master. Is that old fox to be allowed to stifle the honest affection, the generous passion of his daughter? It is impossible.

HARLEQUIN. It is impossible. Love will find a way.

CRISPIN. If my master had been some impecunious beggar.... Tell me, isn't Signor Polichinelle the one who ought to be congratulated that my master has condescended to fall in love with his daughter, and is willing to accept him for his father-in-law?—my master, who has rejected the advances of so many damsels of high degree; my master, for whom over four princesses have committed I know not how many absurdities! But who is here? [*Looking toward the right*] Ah, Columbine! Come in, my beautiful Columbine! Do not be afraid. [COLUMBINE *enters from the right*] We are all your friends, and our mutual friendship will protect you from our mutual admiration.

COLUMBINE. Doña Sirena has sent me for news of your master. It was scarcely day when Silvia came to our house and confided everything that had happened to my mistress. She says that she will never return to her father, nor leave my mistress, unless it is to become the bride of Signor Leander.

CRISPIN. Does she say that? O, noble girl! O, constant, true-hearted lover!

HARLEQUIN. What an epithalamium I shall write for their wedding!

COLUMBINE. Silvia is positive that Leander is wounded. She heard the clash of swords beneath the balcony, your cries for help; then she fell senseless and they found her in a swoon at daybreak. Tell me how Signor Leander is, for she is beside herself with anxiety to hear, and my lady also is much distressed.

CRISPIN. Tell her that my master escaped with his life only through the unutterable power of love. Tell her that he is dying now only from the incurable wounds of love. Tell her that to the last.... [*Seeing* LEANDER *approach*] Ah,

but here he is himself, and he will be able to give you later news than I.

LEANDER *enters.*

CAPTAIN. [*Embracing him*] My dear, good friend!

HARLEQUIN. [*Embracing him*] My friend and master!

COLUMBINE. Ah, Signor Leander, what happiness! You are safe!

LEANDER. What? How did you know?

CRISPIN. Nothing else is talked about in the city. People gather in groups in the squares murmuring vengeance and venting imprecations upon Signor Polichinelle.

LEANDER. What is this?

CAPTAIN. He had better not dare to attempt your life a second time.

HARLEQUIN. He had better not dare to attempt to arrest the true course of your love.

COLUMBINE. It would be useless. Silvia is in my mistress's house and she swears that she will leave it only to become your bride.

LEANDER. Silvia in your house? But her father....

COLUMBINE. Signor Polichinelle has all he can do to look after himself.

CAPTAIN. What? I knew that man would be up to something. Oh, of what base uses money is capable!

HARLEQUIN. It is capable of everything but love; of that it is incapable.

COLUMBINE. He tried to have you assassinated dishonorably in the dark.

CRISPIN. By twelve cutthroats. Twelve! I counted them.

LEANDER. I made out only three or four.

CRISPIN. My master will end by telling you that there was no danger so as not to receive credit for his coolness and

his bravery—but I saw it. There were twelve; twelve armed to the teeth, prepared to do murder. It seemed impossible that he could escape with his life.

COLUMBINE. I must run and calm Silvia and my mistress.

CRISPIN. Listen, Columbine. As to Silvia—wouldn't it be as well, perhaps, not to calm her?

COLUMBINE. Leave that to my mistress. Silvia is convinced that your master is dead, and although Doña Sirena is making the most unheard-of efforts to console her, it will not be long before she is here in spite of the consequences.

CRISPIN. I ought to have known of what your mistress was capable.

CAPTAIN. We must be going, too; there is nothing here that we can do. The point is to arouse the indignation of the people against Signor Polichinelle.

HARLEQUIN. We shall stone his house; we shall raise the whole city. Until to-day not a single man has dared to lift his hand against him; to-day we will all dare to do it together. There is an uplift, a moral earnestness in a crowd.

COLUMBINE. He will come creeping on his knees and beg you to accept his daughter as your wife.

CRISPIN. Yes, yes, he will indeed! Run, friends, run! The life of my master is not secure. A man who has once made up his mind to assassinate him is not likely to be turned aside for a trifle.

CAPTAIN. Have no fear, my good friend.

HARLEQUIN. My friend and master!

COLUMBINE. Signor Leander!

LEANDER. Thanks to you all, my friends. My loyal friends!

All go out but LEANDER *and* CRISPIN.

LEANDER. What is this, Crispin? What are you trying to do? Where do you expect to come out with all your

lies? Do you know what I believe? You paid those fellows yourself; it was your idea. I should have got off badly enough among so many if they had been in earnest.

CRISPIN. Have you the temerity to reproach me when I precipitate the fulfilment of your desires so skilfully?

LEANDER. No, Crispin, no. You know you do not. I love Silvia. I am resolved: I shall never win her love through deception, come what may.

CRISPIN. You know very well, then, what will come. Do you call it love to sit down and resign yourself to losing what you love for the sake of these quibbles of conscience? Silvia herself would not thank you for it.

LEANDER. What do you mean? If she once learns who I am....

CRISPIN. By the time she finds out you will no longer be the one that you are. You will be her husband then, her beloved husband, who is everything that is noble and faithful and true, and whatever else you like besides, or that her heart desires. Once you are master of her heart—and her fortune—will you not be a complete and perfect gentleman? You will not be like Signor Polichinelle, who, with all his wealth which permits him so many luxuries, has not yet been able to permit himself the luxury of being honest. Deceit is natural to him, but with you it was only necessity. If you had not had me at your side you would have starved to death before this out of pure conscientiousness. Ah! do you suppose that if I had thought for one moment that you were a man of another sort, I would have been satisfied to devote your abilities to love? No, I would have put you into politics, and not merely the fortune of Signor Polichinelle would have been ours, but a chastened and admiring world. But you are not ambitious. You will be satisfied to be happy.

LEANDER. But can't you see that no good, no happiness,

can come out of this? If I could lie so as to make her love me and in that way become rich, then it could only be because I did not love. And if I did not love, then how could I be happy? And if I love, how can I lie?

CRISPIN. Don't lie, then. Love, love passionately, entirely, with your whole heart and soul. Put your love before everything else upon earth. Guard and protect it. A lover does not lie when he keeps to himself what he thinks might prejudice the blind affection of his mistress.

LEANDER. These are subtleties, Crispin.

CRISPIN. Which you would have known all about before if you had really been in love. Love is all subtleties and the greatest subtlety of them all is not that lovers deceive others —it is that they can so easily deceive themselves.

LEANDER. I do not deceive myself, Crispin. I am not one of those men who, when they have sold their conscience, think that they have also been able to dispose of their intelligence as well.

CRISPIN. That is the reason I said you would never make a good politician. You are right. For the intelligence is the conscience of truth, and the man who parts with that among the lies of this life is as one who has lost himself. He is without compass or sail. He will never be able to find himself again, nor know himself, but become in all his being just one more living lie.

LEANDER. Where did you learn all these things, Crispin?

CRISPIN. I meditated a little while in the galleys, where this conscience of my intelligence accused me of having been more of a fool than a knave. If I had had more knavery and less stupidity, instead of rowing I might have commanded the ship. So I swore never again to return to the oar. You can see now what I am willing to do for your sake since I am on the point of breaking my oath.

LEANDER. In what way?

CRISPIN. Our situation has become desperate. We have exhausted our credit, and our dupes begin to demand something more substantial than talk: the innkeeper who entertained us so long with such munificence, expecting that you would receive your remittances; Signor Pantaloon, who, hearing of the credit extended by the innkeeper, advanced us whatever was necessary to install us sumptuously in this house; tradesmen of every description, who did not hesitate to provide us with every luxury, dazzled by such display; Doña Sirena herself, who has lent us her invaluable good offices in your love affair—they have all only asked what was reasonable; it would be unjust to expect more of them or to complain of such delightful people. The name of this fair city shall ever be engraven upon my heart in letters of gold. From this hour I claim it as my adopted mother! But more than this, have you forgotten that they have been searching for us in other parts and following on our heels? Can it be that all those glorious exploits of Mantua and Florence have been forgotten? Don't you recall that famous lawsuit in Bologna? Three thousand two hundred pages of testimony already admitted against us before we withdrew in alarm at the sight of such prodigious expansive ability! Do you imagine that it has not continued to grow under the pen of that learned doctor and jurist, who has taken it under his wing? How many whereases and therefores must there now be therefore, whereas they are all there for no good? Do you still doubt? Do you still hesitate and reprove me because I give the battle to-day which is to decide our fate forever at a single blow?

LEANDER. Let us fly!

CRISPIN. No! Let the despairing fly! This day decides. We challenge fortune. I have given you love; give me life!

LEANDER. But how can we save ourselves? What can I do? Tell me.

CRISPIN. Nothing yet. It will be enough to accept what others offer. We have intertwined ourselves with the interests of many, and the bonds of interest will prove our salvation.

DOÑA SIRENA *enters.*

SIRENA. Have I your permission, Signor Leander?

LEANDER. Doña Sirena! What? You in my house?

SIRENA. I am conscious of the risk I am running—the gossip of evil tongues. What? Doña Sirena in the house of a young and gallant gentleman?

CRISPIN. My master will know how to avoid all cause of scandal, if any indeed could attach to your name.

SIRENA. Your master? I would not trust him. Men are so boastful! But it is idle to anticipate. What, sir, is this talk about an attempt to kill you last night? I have not heard another thing since I got up in the morning. And Silvia! The poor child! How she loves you! I would give a great deal to know what it was that you did to make her fall in love with you like that.

CRISPIN. My master feels that it was what you did. He owes it all to you.

SIRENA. I should be the last one to deny that he owes me anything. I have always tried to speak well of him—a thing I had no right to do, not knowing him sufficiently. I have gone to great lengths in his service. Now if you are false to your promise....

CRISPIN. You do not doubt my master? Have you not the papers signed in his own hand?

SIRENA. The hand is a good one and so is the name. I don't bother about them. I know what it is to trust, and I know that Signor Leander will pay me what he owes. But

to-day has been a bitter day for me, and if you could let me have to-day one-half of what you have promised, I would willingly forego the other half.

CRISPIN. To-day, do you say?

SIRENA. A day of tribulation! And what makes it worse, it is twenty years ago to-day that my second husband died, who was my first—yes, my only love.

CRISPIN. May he rest in peace with all the honors of the first!

SIRENA. The first was forced upon me by my father. I never loved him, but in spite of it he insisted upon being faithful to me.

CRISPIN. What knowledge you have of men, Doña Sirena!

SIRENA. But let us leave these recollections, which are depressing, and turn to hope. Would you believe it? Silvia insisted upon coming with me.

LEANDER. Here? To this house?

SIRENA. Where do you suppose it was that she insisted upon coming? What do you say to that? What would Signor Polichinelle say? With all the city roused against him, there would be nothing for him to do but to have you marry.

LEANDER. No, no! Don't let her come....

CRISPIN. Hush! You know my master has a way of not saying what he means.

SIRENA. I know. What would he give to see Silvia at his side, never to be separated from him more?

CRISPIN. What would he give? You don't know what he would give!

SIRENA. That is the reason I ask.

CRISPIN. Ah, Doña Sirena! If my master becomes the husband of Silvia to-day, to-day he will pay you everything that he has promised you.

SIRENA. And if he does not?

CRISPIN. Then you lose everything. Suit yourself.

LEANDER. Silence, Crispin, silence! Enough! I cannot submit to have my love treated as a bargain. Go, Doña Sirena! Say to Silvia that she must return to her father's house, that under no circumstances is she ever to enter mine; that she must forget me forever. I shall fly and hide myself in the desert places of the earth, where no man shall see me, no, nor so much as know my name. My name? I wonder—have I a name?

CRISPIN. Will you be silent?

SIRENA. What is the matter with him? What paroxysm is this? Return to your senses! Come to your proper mind! How? Renounce so glorious an enterprise for nothing? You are not the only person who is to be considered. Remember that there are others who have put their confidence in you. A lady of quality who has exposed herself for your sake is not to be betrayed with impunity. You will do no such thing. You will not be so foolish. You will marry Silvia or there will be one who will find a way to bring you to a reckoning for all your impostures. I am not so defenseless in the world as you may think, Signor Leander.

CRISPIN. Doña Sirena is right. But believe me, this fit of my master's—he is offended by your reproaches, your want of confidence.

SIRENA. I don't want confidence in your master. And I might as well say it—I don't want confidence in Signor Polichinelle. He is not a man to be trifled with, either. After the outcry which you raised against him by your stratagem of last night——

CRISPIN. Stratagem, did you say?

SIRENA. Bah! Everybody knows it. One of the rascals

was a relative of mine, and among the others I had connections. Very well, sirs, very well! Signor Polichinelle has not been asleep. It is said in the city that he has given information as to who you are to Justice, and on what grounds you may be apprehended. It is said that a process has arrived to-day from Bologna——

CRISPIN. And a devil of a doctor with it? Three thousand nine hundred folios....

SIRENA. So it is said and on good authority. You see that there is no time to lose.

CRISPIN. Who is losing and who is wasting time but you? Return, return at once to your house! Say to Silvia——

SIRENA. Silvia? Silvia is here. She came along with me and Columbine as one of the attendants in my train. She is waiting in the antechamber. I told her that you were wounded horribly.

LEANDER. Oh, my Silvia!

SIRENA. She has reconciled herself to your death. She hopes for nothing else. She expects nothing else. She thinks nothing of what she risks in coming here to see you. Well? Are we friends?

CRISPIN. You are adorable! [*To* LEANDER] Quick! Lie down here. Stretch yourself out in this chair. Seem sick, suffer, faint—be downhearted. And remember, if I am not satisfied with the appearance, I will substitute the reality!

[*Threatening him and forcing him into a chair.*

LEANDER. Yes, I am in your power! I see it, I know it! But Silvia shall never be! Yes, let me see her. Tell her to come in. I shall save her in spite of you, in spite of everything, in spite even of herself!

CRISPIN. You know my master has a way of not meaning what he says.

SIRENA. I never thought him such a fool. Come with me.

[*She goes out with* CRISPIN.

SILVIA *enters.*

LEANDER. Silvia! My Silvia!

SILVIA. But aren't you wounded?

LEANDER. No, don't you see? It was a lie, another lie to bring you here. But don't be afraid. Your father will come soon; soon you will leave this house with him without having any cause to reproach me.... Ah! None but that I have disturbed the serenity of your soul with an illusion of love which will be to you in the future no more than the remembrance of a dark and evil dream!

SILVIA. But Leander? Then your love was not real?

LEANDER. My love was, yes. That is why I could not deceive you. Leave this place at once—before any but those who brought you here discover that you came.

SILVIA. What are you afraid of? Am I not safe in your house? I was not afraid to come. What harm can happen to me at your side?

LEANDER. You are right. None! My love will protect you even from your innocence.

SILVIA. I can never go back to my father's house—not after the horrible thing which he did last night.

LEANDER. No, Silvia, do not blame your father. It was not his fault; it was another deception, another lie. Fly from me; forget this miserable adventurer, this nameless outcast, a fugitive from justice....

SILVIA. No, it isn't true. No! It is the conduct of my father which makes me unworthy of your love. That is what it is. I see it all now. I understand. Ay, for me!

LEANDER. Silvia! My Silvia! How cruel your sweet words are! How cruel this noble confidence of your heart, so innocent of evil and of life!

CRISPIN *enters, running.*

CRISPIN. Master! Master! Signor Polichinelle is coming!

SILVIA. My father!

LEANDER. It doesn't matter. I shall lead you to him with my own hand.

CRISPIN. But he is not coming alone. There is a great crowd with him; the officers of justice....

LEANDER. What? Ah! If they should find you here? In my house! [*To* CRISPIN] I see it all now. You have told them. But you shall not succeed in your design!

CRISPIN. I? No. Certainly not! For this time this is in earnest and nothing can save us now.

LEANDER. No, not us. Nor shall I try. But her.... Yes! Hide her, conceal her! We must secrete her here.

SILVIA. But you?

LEANDER. Have no fear. Quick! They are on the stair. [*He hides* SILVIA *in a room at the rear, meanwhile saying to* CRISPIN] See what these fellows want. On your life let no man set his foot within this room after I am gone!.... The game is up! It is the end for me.

[*He runs to the window.*

CRISPIN. [*Holding him back*] Master! Master! Hold! Control yourself. Come to your senses. Don't throw your life away!

LEANDER. I am not throwing my life away.... There is no escape....I am saving her....

He climbs through the window and rapidly up outside and disappears.

CRISPIN. Master! Master! H'm! Not so bad after all. I thought he was going to dash himself to pieces on the ground. Instead he has climbed higher.... There is hope yet—he may yet learn to fly. It is his region, the clouds....

Now I to mine, the firm ground. And more need than ever that I should make certain that it is solid beneath my feet.

[*He seats himself complacently in an armchair.*

POLICHINELLE. [*Without, to those who are with him*] Guard the doors! Let no man escape! No, nor woman either.... Nor dog nor cat!

INNKEEPER. Where are they? Where are these bandits? These assassins?

PANTALOON. Justice! Justice! My money! My money!

SIGNOR POLICHINELLE, *the* INNKEEPER, SIGNOR PANTALOON, *the* CAPTAIN, HARLEQUIN, *the* DOCTOR, *the* SECRETARY, *and two* CONSTABLES *enter, bearing in their arms enormous scrolls and protocols, or papers of the suit. All enter from the right in the order named. The* DOCTOR *and the* SECRETARY *pass at once to the table and prepare to take testimony. Such rolls and papers as cannot be accommodated upon the table the two* CONSTABLES *retain in their hands, remaining standing for that purpose at the rear.*

CAPTAIN. But can this be possible, Crispin?

HARLEQUIN. Is it possible that such a thing can be?

PANTALOON. Justice! Justice! My money! My money!

INNKEEPER. Seize them! Put them in irons!

PANTALOON. Don't let them escape! Don't let them escape!

CRISPIN. What? How is this? Who dares to desecrate with impious clamor the house of a gentleman and a cavalier? Oh, you may congratulate yourselves that my master is not at home!

PANTALOON. Silence! Silence! For you are his accomplice and you will be held to answer to the same reckoning as he.

INNKEEPER. Accomplice, did you say? As guilty as his pretended master!—for he was the one who deceived me.

CAPTAIN. What is the meaning of this, Crispin?

HARLEQUIN. Is there any truth in what these people say?

POLICHINELLE. What have you to say for yourself now, Crispin? You thought you were a clever rogue to cut up your capers with me. I tried to murder your master, did I? I am an old miser who is battening on his daughter's heart? All the city is stirred up against me, is it, heaping me with insults? Well, we shall see.

PANTALOON. Leave him to us, Signor Polichinelle, for this is our affair. After all, you have lost nothing. But I—all my wealth which I lent him without security. I am ruined for the rest of my life. What will become of me?

INNKEEPER. What will become of me, tell me that, when I spent what I never had and even ran into debt so that he might be served—as I thought—in a manner befitting his station? It was my destruction, my ruin.

CAPTAIN. We too were horribly deceived. What will be said of me when it is known that I have put my sword at the disposition of an adventurer?

HARLEQUIN. And of me, when I have dedicated sonnet after sonnet to his praise, just as if he had been any ordinary gentleman?

POLICHINELLE. Ha! Ha! Ha!

PANTALOON. Yes, laugh, laugh, that is right. You have lost nothing.

INNKEEPER. Nobody robbed you.

PANTALOON. To work! To work! Where is the other villain?

INNKEEPER. Better see what there is in the house first.

CRISPIN. Slowly, slowly, gentlemen. If you advance one other step—— [*Threatening them with his sword.*

PANTALOON. What? You threaten us? Again? Is such a thing to be endured? Justice! Justice!

INNKEEPER. Yes, justice!

DOCTOR. Gentlemen, unless you listen to me we shall get nowhere. No man may take justice into his own hands, inasmuch as justice is not haste nor oppression nor vengeance nor act of malice. *Summum jus, summum injuria;* the more wrong, the more justice. Justice is all wisdom, and wisdom is all order, and order is all reason, and reason is all procedure, and procedure is all logic. Barbara, Celarent, Darii, Ferio, Baralipton, deposit all your wrongs and all your disputations with me, for if they are to be of any validity they must all form a part of this process which I have brought in these protocols with me.

CRISPIN. The devil, you say! Hasn't it grown enough already?

DOCTOR. Herein are set down and inscribed divers other offenses of these defendants, whereunto must be added and conjoined each and every one of those of which you may accuse them now. And I must be the advocate in all of them, for that is the only way in which it will be possible for you to obtain satisfaction and justice. Write, Signor Secretary, and let the said complainants depose.

PANTALOON. It might be better to settle our differences among ourselves. You know what justice is.

INNKEEPER. Write nothing. It will only be making the white black, and in the end we shall be left without our money and these rogues without punishment.

PANTALOON. Exactly. My money! My money! And justice afterward.

DOCTOR. You unlearned, you uncivil, you ignorant generation! What do you know of justice? It is not enough for you to say that you have suffered a wrong, unless there

be plainly apparent therein an intention to make you suffer that wrong; that is to say, fraud or deceit, which are not the same, although they are confounded in the popular acceptation. But I say unto you that only in the single case——

PANTALOON. Enough! Enough! You will end by telling us that we are the guilty ones.

DOCTOR. What else am I to think when you persist in denying such a plain and obvious fact?

INNKEEPER. I like that. Good! We were robbed. Do you want any plainer or more obvious fact?

DOCTOR. Know, then, that robbery is not the same as theft, much less is it the same as fraud or deceit, which again are not the same as aforesaid. From the laws of the Twelve Tables down to Justinian, to Tribonian, to Emilian, to Triberian....

PANTALOON. We shall be cheated out of our money. There is no one who can reason me out of that.

POLICHINELLE. The Signor Doctor is right. We can safely leave the matter to him and everything will be attended to in the process.

DOCTOR. Then write, Signor Secretary, write.

CRISPIN. Will any one listen to me?

PANTALOON. No one, no one. Let that rascal be quiet! Silence for that villain!

INNKEEPER. You will have a chance to talk soon enough when you don't want to.

DOCTOR. He will speak at the proper moment, for justice requires that everybody should be afforded an opportunity to talk. Write, write: In the city of....in the matter of.... But it would certainly not be amiss if we proceeded first to an inventory of whatever there is in the house.

CRISPIN. [*Before the door*] It certainly would be a miss....

DOCTOR. Thence to progress to the deposit of security on

the part of the complainants, so that there may be no question as to their good faith when they assert that they have suffered a loss. Two thousand crowns will be sufficient from each of you, to be secured by guarantees upon all your goods and chattels.

PANTALOON. What is that? Two thousand crowns from us?

DOCTOR. I ought to make it eight; however, as you are persons of responsibility, I take that fact into account. I allow nothing to escape me.

INNKEEPER. Hold! And write no more! We cannot submit to this.

DOCTOR. What? Do you threaten justice? Open a separate process for battery and the hand of violence raised against an officer of the law in full performance of his duties.

PANTALOON. This man will be the ruin of us.

INNKEEPER. He is mad.

DOCTOR. What? Do you call me a man and mad? Speak with more respect. Write! Write! Open two more counts. There was also an assault by word of mouth....

CRISPIN. Now see what you have done through not listening to me.

PANTALOON. Talk, talk, for heaven's sake! Talk! Anything would be better than what is happening to us now.

CRISPIN. Then shut off this fellow, for the love of mercy! He is raising up a mountain with his protocols.

PANTALOON. Stop! Stop, I say!

INNKEEPER. Put down that pen!

DOCTOR. Let no man dare to raise his hand.

CRISPIN. Signor Captain, then lend us your sword. It also is the instrument of justice.

CAPTAIN. [*Going up to the table and delivering a tremendous*

blow with his sword upon the papers on which the DOCTOR *is engaged*] Have the kindness to desist.

DOCTOR. You see how ready I am to comply with a reasonable request. Suspend the actions. [*They stop writing*] There is a previous question to be adjudged. The parties dispute among themselves. Nevertheless it will be proper to proceed with the inventory....

PANTALOON. No! No!

DOCTOR. It is a formality which cannot be waived.

CRISPIN. I don't think it would be proper. When the proper time comes you can write as much as you like. But let me have permission first to speak for a moment with these honorable gentlemen.

DOCTOR. If you wish to have what you are about to say recorded as testimony....

CRISPIN. No! By no means. Not a single word, or I shall not open my mouth.

CAPTAIN. Better let the fellow talk.

CRISPIN. What shall I say? What are you complaining about? That you have lost your money? What do you want? To get it back?

PANTALOON. Exactly! Exactly! My money!

INNKEEPER. Our money!

CRISPIN. Then listen to me. Where do you suppose that it is coming from when you insist upon destroying the credit of my master in this fashion, and so make his marriage with the daughter of Signor Polichinelle impossible? Name of Mars! I had rather deal with a thousand knaves than one fool. See what you have done now and how you will be obliged to compound with justice for a half share of what we owe you—I say *owe* you. How will you be any better off if you succeed in sending us to the galleys or to some worse place? Will it put money in your pockets to collect the

welts on our skins? Will you be richer or nobler or more powerful because we are ruined? On the other hand, if you had not interrupted us at such an inopportune moment, to-day, this very day, you would have received your money with interest, which God knows is enough to send you all to hang on the gallows to remain suspended forever, if justice were not in these hands—and these pens. Now do as you see fit; I have told you what you ought to do.

DOCTOR. They will remain suspended until further notice.

CAPTAIN. I would never have believed it possible that their crimes could have been so great.

POLICHINELLE. That Crispin.... He will be capable of convincing them.

PANTALOON. [*To the* INNKEEPER] What do you think of this? Looking at it calmly....

INNKEEPER. What do you think?

PANTALOON. You say that your master was to have married the daughter of Signor Polichinelle to-day? But suppose he refuses to give his consent?

CRISPIN. What good would that do him? His daughter has run away with my master. All the world will soon know it. It is more important to him than it is to any one else not to have it known that his daughter has thrown herself away upon a rapscallion, a man without character, a fugitive from justice.

PANTALOON. Suppose this should turn out to be true? What do you think?

INNKEEPER. Better not weaken. The rogue breathes deceit. He is a master.

PANTALOON. You are right. No one can tell how far to believe him. Justice! Justice!

CRISPIN. I warn you—you lose everything!

PANTALOON. Wait!....just a moment. We will see. A word with you, Signor Polichinelle.

POLICHINELLE. What do you want with me?

PANTALOON. Suppose that we had made a mistake in this complaint. Suppose that Signor Leander should turn out to be, after all, a noble, virtuous gentleman, incapable of the slightest dishonest thought....

POLICHINELLE. What is that? Say that again.

PANTALOON. Suppose that your daughter was in love with him madly, passionately, even to the point where she had run away with him from your house?

POLICHINELLE. My daughter run away from my house with that man? Who says so? Show me the villain! Where is he?

PANTALOON. Don't get excited. It is only in supposition.

POLICHINELLE. Well, sir, I shall not tolerate it even in supposition.

PANTALOON. Try to listen more calmly. Suppose all this should have happened. Wouldn't the best thing for you to do be to let them marry?

POLICHINELLE. Marry? I would see them dead first. But it is useless to consider it. I see what you want. You are scheming to recoup yourselves at my expense, you are such rogues yourselves. But it shall not be! It shall not be!

PANTALOON. Take care! We had better not talk about rogues while you are present.

INNKEEPER. Hear! Hear!

POLICHINELLE. Rogues, rogues!—conspiring to impoverish me. But it shall not be! It shall not be!

DOCTOR. Have no fear, Signor Polichinelle. Even though they should be dissuaded and abandon their design, do you suppose that this process will amount to nothing? Do you

imagine that one line of what is written in it can ever be blotted out, though two and fifty crimes be alleged therein and proved against them, besides as many more which require no proof?

PANTALOON. What do you say now, Crispin?

CRISPIN. That though all those crimes were proved three times and those that require no proof yet three times more than the others, you would still be losing your money and wasting your time, for we cannot pay what we do not have.

DOCTOR. Not at all. That is not good law. For I have to be paid, whatever happens.

CRISPIN. Then the complainants will have to pay you. We shall have more than we can do to pay our offenses with our backs.

DOCTOR. The rights of justice are inviolable, and the first of them is to attach in its interest whatever there is in this house.

PANTALOON. But what good will that do us? How shall we get anything?

INNKEEPER. Of course not! Don't you see?

DOCTOR. Write, write, for if we were to talk forever we should never arrive at a conclusion which would be more satisfactory.

PANTALOON AND INNKEEPER. No! No! Not a word! Not a word!

CRISPIN. Hear me, first, Signor Doctor! In your ear.... Suppose you were to be paid at once, on the spot and without the trouble of all this writing, your....what is it that you call them?—crumbs of justice?

DOCTOR. Perquisites of the law.

CRISPIN. Have it your own way. What would you say to that?

DOCTOR. Why, in that case....

CRISPIN. Listen:—my master will be rich to-day, influential, if Signor Polichinelle consents to his marrying his daughter. Remember that the young lady is the only child of Signor Polichinelle; remember that my master will be master indeed not only of her.... Remember....

DOCTOR. H'm! It certainly does deserve to be remembered.

PANTALOON. [*To* CRISPIN] What does he say?

INNKEEPER. What are you going to do?

DOCTOR. Let me consider. That fellow clearly is not thick-witted. It is easy to see that he is acquainted with legal precedent. For if we remember that the wrong which has been done was purely a pecuniary one, and that every wrong which can be redressed in kind suffers in the reparation the most fitting punishment; if we reflect that in the barbaric and primitive law of vengeance it was written: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but not a tooth for an eye nor an eye for a tooth, so in the present instance it might be argued a crown for a crown and money for money. He has not taken your lives. Why not? The fact is evidence that he did not wish you to take his in return. He has not insulted your persons, impugned your honor, your reputations. Why not? Plainly because he was not willing to submit to a like indignity from you. Equity is the supremest justice. *Equitas justiciam magna est.* And from the Pandects to Tribonian, including Emilianus Tribonianus....

PANTALOON. Include him. So long as we get our money....

INNKEEPER. So long as he pays us....

POLICHINELLE. What is this nonsense? How can he pay? What is the use of all this talk?

CRISPIN. A great deal of use. As I was saying, you are

all deeply interested in saving my master, in saving both of us, for your own advantage, for the common good of all. You, so as not to lose your money; the Signor Doctor so as not to see all this vast store of doctrine go for nothing, which he is heaping up in those sarcophagi of learning; the Signor Captain because everybody knows that he was the friend of my master, and it would not be creditable to his valor to have it said that he had been the dupe of an adventurer; you, Signor Harlequin, because your poetic dithyrambs would lose all their merit as soon as it became known with what little sense you composed them; you, Signor Polichinelle, my dear old friend, because your daughter is now, in the sight of God and before man, Signor Leander's wife.

POLICHINELLE. You lie! You lie! Impudent rascal! Cutthroat!

CRISPIN. I think then that we had better proceed with the inventory of what there is in the house. Write, write, and let all these gentlemen be our witnesses. We can begin with this apartment.

He throws back the tapestry from the door at the rear, and SILVIA, LEANDER, DOÑA SIRENA, COLUMBINE, *and the* WIFE OF POLICHINELLE *appear, forming a group.*

PANTALOON AND THE INNKEEPER. Silvia!

CAPTAIN AND HARLEQUIN. Together! Both of them!

POLICHINELLE. Is it possible? What? Are they all against me? My wife and daughter, too? All, all, for my ruin? Seize that man, these women, this impostor, or I with my own hand....

PANTALOON. Signor Polichinelle, are you out of your head?

LEANDER. [*Advancing toward the proscenium, accompanied by the others*] Your daughter came to my house under the

protection of Doña Sirena, believing that I was wounded; and I ran immediately in search of your wife, so that she too might be present with her and protect her. Silvia knows who I am, she knows the whole story of my life of misery and wandering, of cheats and deceptions and lies—how it has been utterly vile; and I am sure that no vestige of our dream of love any longer remains in her heart. Take her away from this place, take her away! That is my only request before I deliver myself up into the hands of justice.

POLICHINELLE. The punishment of my daughter shall be my affair, but as for this villain.... Seize him, I say!

SILVIA. Father! If you do not save him it will be my death. I love him, I shall love him always; I love him now more than I ever did, because his heart is noble. He has been cruelly unfortunate; and he might have made me his by a lie—but he would not lie.

POLICHINELLE. Silence! Silence, foolish, unhappy girl! This is the result of the bringing up of your mother, of her vanity, her hallucinations, of all your romantic reading, your music to the light of the moon.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. Anything would be preferable to having my daughter marry a man like you, to be unhappy afterward all the rest of her life, like her mother. Of what use are my riches to me?

SIRENA. You are right, Signora Polichinelle. Of what use are riches without love?

COLUMBINE. The same use as love without riches.

DOCTOR. Signor Polichinelle, under the circumstances, the only thing for you to do is to let them marry.

PANTALOON. Or there will be a scandal in the city.

INNKEEPER. And everybody will be on his side.

CAPTAIN. And we can never consent to have you use force against your daughter.

DOCTOR. It will have to stand in the process that they were surprised here together.

CRISPIN. And after all, the only trouble with my master was that he had no money; no one could outdo him in nobility of character; your grandchildren will be gentlemen—even if that quality does not extend up to the grandfather.

ALL. Let them marry! Let them marry!

PANTALOON. Or we will all turn upon you.

INNKEEPER. And your history will be brought to light—the secret story of your life....

HARLEQUIN. And you will gain nothing by that.

SIRENA. A lady begs it of you on her knees, moved to tears by the spectacle of a love so unusual in these days.

COLUMBINE. Which seems more like love in a story.

ALL. Let them marry! Let them marry!

POLICHINELLE. Yes! let them marry in an evil hour. My daughter shall be cut off without dowry and without inheritance. I will ruin my estate rather than that this reprobate....

DOCTOR. You certainly will not do anything of the kind, Signor Polichinelle.

PANTALOON. Who ever heard of such nonsense?

INNKEEPER. I shouldn't think of it for a moment.

HARLEQUIN. What would people say?

CAPTAIN. We could never consent to it.

SILVIA. No, my dear father, I am the one who cannot accept anything. I am the one who must share the poverty of his fate. I love him so.

LEANDER. That is the only condition upon which I can accept your love.

All run toward SILVIA *and* LEANDER.

DOCTOR. What do you say? Are you crazy?

PANTALOON. Preposterous! Absurd!

INNKEEPER. You are going to accept everything.

HARLEQUIN. You will be happy and you will be rich.

WIFE OF POLICHINELLE. What? My daughter in poverty? Is this wretch the hangman?

SIRENA. Remember that love is a delicate babe and able to endure but few privations.

DOCTOR. It is clearly illegal. Signor Polichinelle, you will sign a munificent donation immediately as befits a person of your dignity and importance, who is a kind and loving father. Write, write, Signor Secretary, for this is something to which nobody will object.

ALL. [*Except* POLICHINELLE] Write! Write!

DOCTOR. And you, my dear, my innocent young lovers, resign yourselves to riches. You have no right to carry your prejudices to an extreme at which they become offensive to others.

PANTALOON. [*To* CRISPIN] Now will you pay us?

CRISPIN. Do you doubt it? But you will have to swear first that Signor Leander never owed you anything. See how he is sacrificing himself upon your account, accepting this money which is repugnant to him.

PANTALOON. We always knew that he was a perfect gentleman.

INNKEEPER. Always.

HARLEQUIN. We all believed it.

CAPTAIN. And we shall continue to maintain our belief.

CRISPIN. Now, Doctor, this process.... Do you suppose there is waste space enough anywhere in the world for it to be thrown away upon?

DOCTOR. My foresight has provided for everything. All that will be necessary is to change the punctuation. For example, here where it says: "Whereas I depose and declare, not without due sanction of law"....take out the comma

and it reads: "Whereas I depose and declare not without due sanction of law." And here: "Wherefore he is not without due judgment condemned"....put in a comma and it reads: "Wherefore he is not, without due judgment condemned"....

CRISPIN. O excellent comma! O wonderful, O marvellous comma! Stupendous Genius and Miracle of Justice! Oracle of the Law! Thou Monster of Jurisprudence!

DOCTOR. Now I can rely upon the generosity of your master.

CRISPIN. You can. Nobody knows better than you do how money will change a man.

SECRETARY. I was the one who put in and took out the commas.

CRISPIN. While you are waiting for something better, pray accept this chain. It is of gold.

SECRETARY. H'm! How many carats fine?

CRISPIN. You ought to know. You understand commas and carats.

POLICHINELLE. I impose only one condition:—that this rogue leave your service forever.

CRISPIN. That will not be necessary, Signor Polichinelle. Do you suppose that I am so poor in ambition as my master?

LEANDER. What? You are not going to leave me, Crispin? It will not be without sorrow on my part.

CRISPIN. It will not last long. I can be of no further use to you. With me you will be able to lay aside your lion's skin and your old man's wisdom. What did I tell you, sir? Between them all we were sure to be saved. And believe me now, when you are getting on in the world, the ties of love are as nothing to the bonds of interest.

LEANDER. You are wrong. For without the love of Silvia I should never have been saved.

CRISPIN. And is love a slight interest? I have always given due credit to the ideal and I count upon it always. With this the farce ends.

SILVIA. [*To the audience*] You have seen in it how these puppets have been moved by plain and obvious strings, like men and women in the farces of our lives—strings which were their interests, their passions, and all the illusions and petty miseries of their state. Some are pulled by the feet to lives of restless and weary wandering; some by the hands, to toil with pain, to struggle with bitterness, to strike with cunning, to slay with violence and rage. But into the hearts of all there descends sometimes from heaven an invisible thread, as if it were woven out of the sunlight and the moonbeams, the invisible thread of love, which makes these men and women, as it does these puppets which seem like men, almost divine, and brings to our foreheads the smile and splendors of the dawn, lends wings to our drooping spirits, and whispers to us still that this farce is not all a farce, that there is something noble, something divine in our lives which is true and which is eternal, and which shall not close when the farce of life shall close.

Curtain

THE EVIL DOERS OF GOOD

COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

First Presented at the Teatro Lara, Madrid, on the Evening of the First of December, 1905

CHARACTERS

The Marchioness of Casa Molina
Doña Esperanza
Assumption
Teresa
Nativity
La Repelona
A Maid
Don Heliodoro
Jesus
Martin
Enrique
The Marquis of Santo Toribio
Don Francisquito
Cabrera
Servant

The action passes in a small seaport at the present time

THE EVIL DOERS OF GOOD

THE FIRST ACT

A room in the house of the MARCHIONESS OF CASA MOLINA. *The* MARCHIONESS *and* DON FRANCISQUITO *in conversation.*

DON FRANCISQUITO. Does the Marchioness wish anything else?

MARCHIONESS. Nothing, Don Francisquito; only do be sure to have the accounts ready for the meeting of the Junta this afternoon. Have you looked over the meal tickets which have been turned in? Let us not have any more trouble such as we had last month.

DON FRANCISQUITO. Everything will be all right, Marchioness. Now that the ladies of the committee have decided—very wisely—to let the other Zurita give out the provisions, it will not happen again.

MARCHIONESS. But have we changed shops? I always thought Zurita's was the best.

DON FRANCISQUITO. Yes, Marchioness; but there are two Zuritas in the grocery business. They are brothers. One Zurita is good, but ours is the bad one.

MARCHIONESS. I don't understand.

DON FRANCISQUITO. He is good because he has the best things, but he is bad because he is a godless man, without a particle of conscience, who has made a practice of cheating you unmercifully, without stopping to think that what you spend really belongs to the poor.

MARCHIONESS. That is true. However, I am glad of the change.

DON FRANCISQUITO. *Sí, señora.* The other Zurita, who we all say is the bad one because he does not keep such good things in his shop—in fact he is good. He is a saint who would not demean himself by making money.

MARCHIONESS. I see. The bad one has the good shop, and the good one has the bad one.

DON FRANCISQUITO. He has, Marchioness.

MARCHIONESS. And so we are buying from him now? It all seems very strange.

DON FRANCISQUITO. The ladies so decided at the last meeting. That was before the Marchioness arrived. However, I am surprised that nobody said anything to the Marchioness.

MARCHIONESS. Very likely they did, but probably I was not paying attention. This confusion, you know, of two Zuritas, the good one who is bad, and the bad one who is the good one.... Really it is in the hands of the Lord, I suppose. There is no reason for us to worry. It is hard enough to do good anyway, and one gets very little thanks for it.

DON FRANCISQUITO. That is certainly true, señora. There is very little real religion nowadays—and very little charity; very little honesty. The people you help are the first to say things about you.

MARCHIONESS. What do you expect? We do good to please the Lord; it is utterly useless to look for anything from other people. The only result is ingratitude or some scandal. However, don't forget to go over the accounts.

DON FRANCISQUITO. Rely upon me, Marchioness.

He goes out. ENRIQUE *enters.*

ENRIQUE. Good morning, mamma. [*Kissing her hand.*

MARCHIONESS. My son!

ENRIQUE. Did you sleep well?

MARCHIONESS. Yes, very. How are you this morning? Did you have any headache when you woke up?

ENRIQUE. No, mother.

MARCHIONESS. Did you remember to take that half-glass of milk and the two biscuits during the night?

ENRIQUE. No, mother.

MARCHIONESS. Why not?

ENRIQUE. I didn't wake up during the night.

MARCHIONESS. As a result, you see, you are too weak to get up when the morning comes. I shall have to go in myself and wake you so as to be sure that you take proper nourishment.

ENRIQUE. Don't, mamma.

MARCHIONESS. Why not?

ENRIQUE. I shan't be able to sleep then. I had much rather sleep. Are my cousins up yet?

MARCHIONESS. Not yet. They are very tired after their journey. It is a long trip from Paris; they did not even stop off at Madrid.

ENRIQUE. Are they sleeping in the same room?

MARCHIONESS. Naturally, when they have just been married. What a question to ask!

ENRIQUE. Why, I heard my cousin say last night that they had two rooms at the hotel in Paris.

MARCHIONESS. Did she say that? I am surprised. However, you never can tell what people will do when they are in Paris.

ENRIQUE. She said that they were taken for father and daughter everywhere, except in one place where they were taken——

MARCHIONESS. For brother and sister?

ENRIQUE. No, not exactly—at least that is what Teresa said.

MARCHIONESS. I don't believe a word of it. Your cousin Teresa is rather bizarre. She thinks things are funny which other people interpret otherwise. Anyhow, there isn't so much difference in their ages. She isn't so young, and her husband isn't so old.

ENRIQUE. My new cousin-in-law is horribly ugly though.

MARCHIONESS. There seems to be a conspiracy to agree that he is ugly. He doesn't appear so ugly to me for a man. You must remember that he is a saint; he is a man who is absolutely ideal, and there are not many of them nowadays. Teresita can never thank God sufficiently for her good fortune. She was utterly without prospects after the collapse of her family——

ENRIQUE. Don't you think that she is rather good-looking?

MARCHIONESS. Too good-looking, I think. She ought not to exaggerate matters. Her style of dressing is entirely out of place. You cannot dress like that here without making yourself conspicuous. I shall have to speak to her.

ENRIQUE. Do they expect to stay long?

MARCHIONESS. No, only while they are remodelling their house at Moraleda.

ENRIQUE. Oh! Are they going to live in Moraleda?

MARCHIONESS. Certainly.

ENRIQUE. I supposed they would live in Madrid.

MARCHIONESS. How absurd! Juanito never married your cousin to live in Madrid. To maintain any sort of position in Madrid one has to spend money. They will be leaders in Moraleda so long as your cousin behaves herself. Teresita never did have much sense, any more than your poor Uncle Ramón—I trust God has forgiven him by this time—he certainly did have the craziest head, which proved the destruction of his family, not to speak of the mortification it was to the rest of us, which is precisely what we

suffer now on account of your Uncle Heliodoro, my other dear brother, who is well and strong yet, I thank God for that. It is disagreeable to be obliged to confess it, but the men in our family never did amount to anything. Indeed, I live in dread....

ENRIQUE. Of what? Do you think that I am going to throw myself away?

MARCHIONESS. You? No, my angel! You are a good boy, and you always will be one—now I want you to promise me. Besides, you are not only good naturally, but you have your education and the force of example. They work wonders. It will be time enough for you to learn what the world is like when you arrive at years of discretion. Meanwhile, we can continue living this simple life—which is nothing short of patriarchal—and spend eight months of the year at Moraleda and the other four here, in this quiet place, looking out to sea—far from Madrid, that modern Babylon. I had trouble enough bringing you up, on account of your being so delicate, but, thanks to this regular life, your health seems at last to be pretty well assured. We shall be able to attend to your soul presently, which is more important, and can be lost a great deal more easily. But I think I hear the bridal couple....yes, here comes Juanito.

ENRIQUE. I was waiting to say good morning.

The MARQUIS OF SANTO TORIBIO *enters.*

MARQUIS. Good morning, my dear aunt. I hope you slept well?

MARCHIONESS. Yes. And you? Could you sleep at all? You were not used to the bed.

MARQUIS. No, no—not at all. I slept like a log all night. I am worn out after the journey, in spite of the sleeping-car. I never can sleep on a train. Hello, Enriquito! Good morning.

ENRIQUE. Good morning, cousin. Where is Teresita?

MARQUIS. Oh, finishing her hair. She will be with us in a moment.

MARCHIONESS. What would you like for breakfast?

MARQUIS. Anything will do. Whatever you have.

MARCHIONESS. We usually have *bizcochos* and chocolate. If you prefer something else——

MARQUIS. No, no; by all means, chocolate.

MARCHIONESS. Enrique, ask them to prepare the chocolate.

ENRIQUE *goes out.*

MARQUIS. Enriquillo is a nice boy. I didn't like his color when we arrived last night. I suppose it was the light.

MARCHIONESS. Yes, there is nothing the matter with him now. Poor boy!

MARQUIS. Of course he is not studying anything?

MARCHIONESS. No; it is absolutely prohibited.

MARQUIS. Good! Let him get thoroughly strong first. He is young yet.

MARCHIONESS. Nineteen. How time does fly! I wish his father could see him now. The boy was the apple of his eye. An only son, naturally——

MARQUIS. Yes, and after he had given up the idea of having any. By the way, how old was Manuel when Enriquito was born?

MARCHIONESS. Fifty-two—somewhat advanced.

MARQUIS. Fifty-two? He didn't look it.

MARCHIONESS. He had his best years before him, but life was just one quarrel and disappointment after another. I am sorry to say that my brothers worried him to death; he simply could not stand it. They were always involved in some lawsuit, otherwise it was an out-and-out scandal. He had to work day and night to keep them out of trouble—

of course, to no purpose. By dint of great effort he prevented them from dragging us down; he saved his son and me from disaster. But it was at the cost of his health.

MARQUIS. That reminds me. How is your brother Heliodoro? As festive as ever? I was surprised last night to find him here. I didn't know that he was living with you.

MARCHIONESS. Yes, from time to time. He managed to preserve an income of three or four thousand pesetas from the wreck of his fortune, which he spends during the season in Madrid. Sometimes it takes two or three months; sometimes two weeks are sufficient. The rest of the year he spends with us. I make him a modest allowance.

MARQUIS. Do you have much trouble with him?

MARCHIONESS. No, as long as he has no money he is very repressed. He confines himself to preaching his ideas—I am glad to say not before Enrique. It is prohibited, and he knows better than to transgress. We have agreed as to that—otherwise I should not tolerate him in the house. His doctrines are demoralizing. They are perfectly awful!

MARQUIS. Whatever he has no facilities for translating into acts.

MARCHIONESS. They are downright heretical.

MARQUIS. How is he now about drink? Satisfied with talk?

MARCHIONESS. I wish I could say so. At times, to be frank—well, we keep him off the streets. Things happen more in retirement. Fortunately, everybody understands, so they see that he gets home without attracting attention. He remains in bed then for two or three days, Enrique worries because he suffers from such tremendous headaches, and so we go on bearing this terrible cross. But tell me—how are you? Are you happy now that you are married? I certainly hope for the best.

MARQUIS. Yes, very happy. Teresa is charming; she has an even, cheerful disposition.

MARCHIONESS. Undoubtedly; although you must make some allowance for her youth. After she has lived awhile with you, she will settle down to a sober routine. You will be happy. I am sure that she is the woman you have been looking for to run the house and be a second mother to your children. How sad that the poor dears lost their own mother so young! If they had all been boys it would not have mattered, but you cannot bring up girls without a woman in the house. Teresita is very affectionate. Of course you have discovered that. And she is fond of children. She will love them just as much as her own.

MARQUIS. I am sure; although I think for the present it will be just as well for them to remain at school. From what they write they seem to be satisfied. They like school. You know how children are—or rather you know what notions people will put into their heads, things they would never have thought of themselves. They don't seem to like the idea of my marriage, the girls especially. I wish you could have seen their letter. I was amused, to tell the truth; but I was angry.

MARCHIONESS. I see the hand of your sister Rosalia. She never could reconcile herself to the idea of your marrying again.

MARQUIS. Imagine my position!

MARCHIONESS. But whose fault was it? If it had been possible to get along with her, there wasn't any one you would rather have had in the house.

MARQUIS. It was simply out of the question. Neither I nor the children nor the servants could abide her. You know what she is.

MARCHIONESS. Yes, and I predicted what was going to

happen the last time that we freed our minds. She will die alone in a corner some day, with a couple of cats and an old parrot.

ENRIQUE *enters, with one hand tied in a handkerchief.*

ENRIQUE. I told them to bring the chocolate.

MARCHIONESS. What have you done to your hand?

ENRIQUE. Nothing; just a little burn.

MARCHIONESS. A burn? How did that happen? Were you in the kitchen?

ENRIQUE. No; it was Teresa's alcohol stove. She called me in as I was passing her room. She was curling her hair, and we upset the stove.

MARCHIONESS. I wish you would be more careful. Why will you be so rough? You are just like two children. Ask the servants to scrape a potato and bandage it at once.

ENRIQUE. Oh! It is not worth the trouble.

MARQUIS. What time does the mail get in?

MARCHIONESS. At noon, usually.

MARQUIS. Do you take any papers?

MARCHIONESS. Our Moralcda paper; we have none from Madrid. If there is any news we hear it later from Don Francisquito. A newspaper is not a thing one leaves lying about the house. Don Francisquito will send out and get one for you. Only remember; it is not for everybody.

MARQUIS. No, I am not much of a newspaper reader myself. I run over the head-lines; that is all.

TERESA *enters.*

TERESA. Good morning, aunt. Aren't you going to kiss me?

MARCHIONESS. Great heavens!

TERESA. What is the matter?

MARCHIONESS. Nothing. I will see you later.

TERESA. What is it? No, tell me now.

MARCHIONESS. Not before Enrique.

TERESA. I was startled myself at first....

MARCHIONESS. [*Under her breath*] That *déshabille*, my dear. It is entirely too low.

TERESA. Oh! Is that all? I didn't think there was any harm; I am so thin——

MARCHIONESS. Be careful what you say. I can tell that *matinée* is from Paris.

TERESA. Yes, it comes from a chain of shops which belongs to a religious order—so I am told.

MARCHIONESS. Teresita! You are married now. Such things are not appropriate to a woman in your condition. Think how it looks.

TERESA. I am afraid you expect too much. There is so much more to marriage than just a question of clothes. I know I have always been a child. Now that I am grown up I still feel that I am a child; I always shall. It is awfully hard to remember to be dignified, and not run and skip rope or play dolls, or dance around in a ring and sing with the children. I shan't be able to believe when I get back to Moraleda and find four children waiting for me in the house, that I am their mother—that they are really my children. It seems to me that they will be more like brothers and sisters, whom I am to take care of and teach how to play. We are going to have such nice times together. I love them already, and I know they will all love me. I am sure of it, although I have never seen them, because we are all children, and then they haven't any mother. And I know what that means.

MARQUIS. Oh! I forgot to tell you I had decided that it was best not to bring them to Moraleda for the present.

TERESA. Why not?

MARQUIS. They will be better off at school; they write

they are contented. It will do them good. Anyhow, I don't want you to be tied down so soon. You will never have any time to enjoy yourself if you begin by taking up the cares of housekeeping and the responsibilities of a family.

TERESA. I am sorry that you feel that way about me. I suppose it is my fault. Naturally you have no confidence in my judgment when I tell you I am a child. I know my aunt feels the same. She thinks I have no self-control. She has always been convinced of it.

MARCHIONESS. I cannot imagine what makes you say that. If I had had any such idea, you may be sure I should never have consented to your marriage, considering what marriage implies.

TERESA. You may think so, but I know better. Juan, you are not going to have another mother for your children —you will only have one more child, one burden more. I want you to teach me, for I am dreadfully ignorant, although when I lost my mother I fell into the hands of a stepmother who was very severe, and knew how to bring up bad children.

MARCHIONESS. You fell into the hands of a stepmother?

TERESA. Yes. Poverty.

MARCHIONESS. I can't see that you have any right to complain. How long did your poverty last? As soon as you had nothing at home everything was provided at our house. Haven't we done everything that we could to make you happy? Aren't you happy now?

TERESA. I am afraid that I am not selfish enough. If I am to be happy, I want to feel that everybody about me is happy. I was not the only one at home; the others were not as fortunate as I. And I am not the only one now. I want to feel that everybody is happy, don't you see? Everybody! I knew that something was the matter when you said a moment ago that the children were not coming to live

with us, otherwise you would not have changed your mind. Somebody has told you something. Or is it something that you have noticed yourself? I want you to be frank with me and always tell me what you feel. I like to see in people's faces that they trust me. I want to know what is in their hearts. I can't bear frowns and scowls and sour looks. They frighten me; I don't know what to do. Am I too cheerful? You will soon see how serious I can be, only I don't want you to look so worried about it. If I am ever to be cheerful, then I shall have to keep it to myself.

ENRIQUE. Don't, mother! Don't be so hard on Teresita.

MARCHIONESS. Hard on her? I should think not! What is the matter with you? Who ever saw such a boy! He is crying. I never heard of anyone being so sensitive. What are you crying for?

MARQUIS. A grown man? Over nothing!

MARCHIONESS. His heart is tender.

TERESA. Poor Enrique! You are too sensitive to be happy in this world.

A SERVANT *enters.*

SERVANT. The Marquis and Marchioness may take chocolate.

MARCHIONESS. Do you prefer it here with us?

MARQUIS. No, we will go into the dining-room.

TERESA. I don't care for any; we are later than usual this morning. If I take anything I shall have no appetite for luncheon.

MARQUIS. Just as you say. I am exhausted myself. I must eat.

MARCHIONESS. Perhaps you can help your cousin, Enrique.

MARQUIS. Good! And when I am done you can take me out to telegraph.

ENRIQUE. That will be nice.

MARQUIS. Good-by, aunt.

MARCHIONESS. Good-by.

The MARQUIS *and* ENRIQUE *go out.*

TERESA. Enrique is such a nice boy!

MARCHIONESS. Poor angel!

TERESA. It is too bad that he is so sensitive. I hate to think what would happen to him if he should ever have to shift for himself. You were not young when he was born, and he has no father. Suppose he should be thrown upon the world and you were not here—he is only a child. You don't know what it means to be deprived of the love and protection of your parents, and find yourself suddenly face to face with the indifference of strangers. I don't want you to say now that I am not serious.

MARCHIONESS. A little too serious. It seems to me that I detect a note of complaint. When you lost your parents you were not thrown upon the world and left to shift for yourself, amid the indifference of strangers.

TERESA. You are right and you must forgive me. You have been very kind. I owe you everything.

MARCHIONESS. It is too much to expect, my dear, that all our desires should be gratified in this life. I know as well as you do what dreaming and visions mean to the young; I know what a girl imagines love to be like when she is twenty. But then I know that this marriage was the best possible guarantee of the future to a girl in your position. I have lived longer than you. Call it a marriage of convenience if you like—entirely too convenient for the taste of the young; but some day you will realize that it was your only surety against the risks to which you were exposed. Virtue is always at a disadvantage when it is combined with poverty and good looks.

TERESA. I realize that, and I did from the beginning; I never complained. I was more anxious to make others happy than to be happy myself.

DON HELIODORO *enters.*

DON HELIODORO. Hello! You here, niece? My little niece!

TERESA. Good morning, uncle. How is it that you are out so early?

DON HELIODORO. This is the bathing season. Water is my element. I had a fine bath. Nothing else is so good for my headaches.

TERESA. Do you still have those headaches?

DON HELIODORO. Worse and worse. Sometimes I am in bed for two or three days together. I was recovering from one last night when you came.

MARCHIONESS. Fortunately, it was not a bad one.

DON HELIODORO. No I slept it off. You must forgive me if I hardly noticed you. You know how I am. I wish you would explain to your husband——

TERESA. It is not necessary to explain.

DON HELIODORO. Well, how did you get along on your honeymoon? How was that wedding trip? Did you enjoy yourself in Paris? But you had been there before.

TERESA. Yes, when I was a child.

DON HELIODORO. I remember—you went with your father. Poor Ramón! How he did enjoy Paris! There is nothing like it. Everybody ought to make three visits to Paris: first before he is married, next just after he has been married, and then again when he is a widower. I have tried all three, and it would be difficult to say when I enjoyed myself most.

MARCHIONESS. It would? When you were under least sense of restraint.

DON HELIODORO. That was when I was married. When I was single and when I was a widower it was just one embarrassment after another.

MARCHIONESS. You may suppress the details of your adventures. We can imagine what they were.

DON HELIODORO. Do you expect to be with us long?

TERESA. I can't say. We are remodelling the house at Moraleda.

DON HELIODORO. You will find it tiresome; this is a dull spot.

MARCHIONESS. I don't see how you can call it dull. The quiet is its principal attraction. Thank God, we are free from summer visitors!

DON HELIODORO. Yes, thank God! You could never get here without his special interposition. I never saw such a wretched road. What diligences, what service! Then, when you get here, how pleasant they do make it! If there is anything out of the ordinary in your appearance, the children run shouting after you down the street; the grown people stare as if you were some strange species of vermin. Everybody who is anybody rolls himself up in a ball like a hedgehog, so as to prevent contamination by strangers. Then there is so much to do here. No, no theatre; of course not! If a company of strolling players dares to lift its head, the priests preach against it from the pulpits, Doña Esperanza takes up the crusade in her *tertulia*, and the first thing you know the plays all turn out to be sinful, the leading lady isn't married to the man you thought was her husband, the soubrette's skirts are too short—and God help the poor actors! We had music for a while on Sundays in the *glorieta*, but never again! The boys held the girls too close when they danced. So now the girls have a club of their own under the supervision of the ladies, and the men have another

which has been organized by the gentlemen. They have a chorus and sing; it seems to be moral and uplifting. The only café closes at eleven. There is nowhere to go except our house—how exciting! And on Saturdays you can look in on Doña Esperanza. I call her the She-Bishop; she has an eye out for everything. She criticises, she lays down the law, she can tell you the proper cut for your bathing suit, and when you ought to take a bath—yes, and when it is time for you to go to bed, and with whom.

MARCHIONESS. Heliodoro! Don't you begin romancing. That will do.

DON HELIODORO. I say with whom because she makes all the matches. She fixes it up for the rich and the poor. You have had the experience; your aunt's one idea is to imitate her. You were auctioned off on that plan.

MARCHIONESS. Heliodoro, Heliodoro, I fear you are not over that headache. I shall have to retire with Teresita if you continue like this.

DON HELIODORO. Poor Teresita! Wait and see. How shall I put it? Ah! You know Moraleda? Well, this is the same, only more restricted and confined; there is a tighter blockade. They have got us and we suffocate. You will see, you will see.

MARCHIONESS. Hush! Don't pay any attention to him. Nobody minds what he says.

DON FRANCISQUITO *enters.*

MARCHIONESS. What is it, Don Francisquito?

DON FRANCISQUITO. Doña Esperanza and Doña Assumption are waiting down-stairs. They have come to pay their respects to the Marchioness's niece, the Marchioness of Santo Toribio.

MARCHIONESS. Yes, by all means. Ask them up.

DON FRANCISQUITO *retires.*

DON HELIODORO. They are here.

MARCHIONESS. I don't wish to criticise, Teresita, but I think I would change that *matinée*.

TERESA. It won't take a minute; it will be no trouble at all. Wait until you see my new dress.

DON HELIODORO. Better wear gloves and put a brake on your conversation. We don't want to shock them.

MARCHIONESS. Frankly, Heliodoro, this is worse than an out-and-out headache. A few symptoms and you are impossible.

TERESA. I must hurry and dress. [*Goes out.*

MARCHIONESS. You ought to be ashamed to talk like this before Teresita. It is lucky her husband didn't hear you.

DON HELIODORO. He will later.

MARCHIONESS. Remember, Heliodoro!

DON HELIODORO. That's right. Remind me that I am living on charity.

MARCHIONESS. Who ever thought of such a thing? All I ask is to have you respect me and my house—yes, and yourself; and I should be satisfied.

DON HELIODORO. How about my convictions? My principles, my ideas? Aren't they to be considered? You don't suppose that I am going to sacrifice my ideas for a crust of bread?

MARCHIONESS. There is something the matter with you to-day. What are you sitting down for? The ladies are not calling on you. However, as long as you behave yourself——

DON HELIODORO. The probabilities are against it. I love to annoy the ladies; it is the only liberty they allow me. I am afraid I am going to say something awful.

MARCHIONESS. Mercy on us!

DON HELIODORO. After the explosion, eh? Well, God have mercy on you, even as I have mercy.

[*He sings the "Marseillaise."*

"Allons, enfants de la patrie!"

I must work up a proper frame of mind.

MARCHIONESS. In any event, they know you are not responsible.

DON HELIODORO. [*Singing*]

"Le jour de gloire est arrivé!"

DOÑA ESPERANZA *and* DOÑA ASSUMPTION *enter.*

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Here we are, Marchioness.

ASSUMPTION. Marchioness!

MARCHIONESS. Esperanza and Assumption! My dear friends!

DON HELIODORO. How do you do, ladies?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Ah! Don Heliodoro! We are glad to see you at last. An unexpected pleasure.

ASSUMPTION. Indeed it is! You are rarely visible.

DON HELIODORO. It happens that way. I make it a rule never to go out upon Saturdays.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. You do?

DON HELIODORO. Is that the evening of your *tertulia?*

DOÑA ESPERANZA. So it is! [*Aside to* ASSUMPTION] He is trying to insult us.

ASSUMPTION. [*Idem*] Drunk as usual! He stops at nothing.

DON HELIODORO. [*Sings*]

"Contre nous de la tyrannie!"

MARCHIONESS. I hope you don't mind what he does. I think sometimes that his head is affected; we notice it in the family. He has had a great deal of trouble.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Not to speak of headaches. So Teresita and her husband arrived last night? I am delighted to hear that they are getting along so nicely, although I expected it. Santo Toribio is a man without spot—a perfect gentleman, a true Christian. I wish all men were like him. Teresita is indeed fortunate.

ASSUMPTION. Is there any news?

MARCHIONESS. News?

ASSUMPTION. Why——

MARCHIONESS. Oh!—No, not as yet. However, she will be out in a minute to speak for herself. She stayed in bed very late. The journey was tiresome.

ASSUMPTION. No wonder.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Don't disturb them on our account.

MARCHIONESS. Not at all. It will be a pleasure——

ASSUMPTION. The pleasure will be ours.

MARCHIONESS. She is very fond of you both. Whenever she writes she always sends you her love.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. I hope you sent her ours while you were about it.

MARCHIONESS. And she asked me to thank you.

ASSUMPTION. We appreciate it. She always knew what we thought of her.

MARCHIONESS. She reciprocates it fully.

DON HELIODORO. [*As if to himself*] She is entirely yours, yours; she considers it a great honor——

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Is he talking to himself?

MARCHIONESS. Did you say anything?

DON HELIODORO. No, I was merely running over a few polite phrases. A coincidence; association of ideas—"Allow me!" "No, no! allow me; I beg your pardon"—I had an elegant bringing up.

MARCHIONESS. Are you surprised that I am worried about him?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. You have our sympathy, Marchioness. How often I say to my sister: "I am so sorry for the poor Marchioness!"

ASSUMPTION. Somehow or other we always seem to be saying: "Poor Marchioness!"

MARCHIONESS. I knew that you were friends of mine.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. You knew how we loved you.

MARCHIONESS. You have time for nothing else.

ASSUMPTION. And we know that you love us.

MARCHIONESS. I often say to my poor boy: "How I do love Esperanza and Assumption!" Enrique loves you too.

DON HELIODORO. And so do I; I love you.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. We have not the same confidence in your love, Don Heliodoro—if I make myself clear.

DON HELIODORO. I cannot imagine why. It is the pure article.

ASSUMPTION. To be viewed with suspicion. Your corner in the club enjoys a deserved reputation. All the *mots* and the scandal originate there.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. I believe myself that he was at the bottom of that story about poor María de la O. I suppose you knew all about it, Marchioness? I was shocked. However, I don't believe a word of it. I am the last person in the world to think evil.

DON HELIODORO. If you don't believe it, you have a good excuse for investigating the details.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. There has recently been an extraordinary amount of gossip in this town. Nobody ever used to speak ill of anybody.

ASSUMPTION. I blame it all on the club. The men who

are good for nothing congregate there; they have nothing else to do.

DON HELIODORO. We are thinking of organizing a chorus.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. I understood that you were devoting your attention to our chorus, and doing everything you could to bring it into contempt. The other night, during the concert in the plaza, you stood on the balcony at the club and howled like a cat. A witty idea!

DON HELIODORO. No, you do me injustice. It was a real cat—Michito, the club cat; he was spending the evening on the terrace. He has fallen in love, poor chap! All I did was to meow two or three times to encourage him. I was his Zapaquilda.

"The chaste Zapaquilda,
With love the cat filled her"....

ASSUMPTION. You hardly expect us to believe that canard about the cat. What is your objection to our chorus?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. How does it interfere with you?

DON HELIODORO. Not at all, not at all. As long as it doesn't sing, not at all.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Isn't it a great deal better for the working man to pass his leisure in song than in taverns and revolutionary clubs, dissipating his time reading and hearing talk that is seditious?

ASSUMPTION. Take the two kinds of men; put them side by side. What a contrast! How orderly, how respectful some are! Their every desire seems to have been gratified. On the other hand, there are others who do nothing but complain, roister about, and shout at the top of their lungs. They even strike.

DON HELIODORO. No doubt they do. The other fellows

have everything they want, and you take good care to see that they get nothing.

MARCHIONESS. There must be some distinction.

DON HELIODORO. Now you have it—some distinction. You are not handing out alms and charity for nothing. All you ask is a profession of faith, an oath of absolute allegiance, social, religious, political, sentimental—yes, even sentimental. You are shocked when you find some one who is not willing to sell his soul, his most cherished beliefs, for whatever you are ready to offer, and there are fewer poor men who will do it, let me tell you, than gentlemen among the upper classes. You think that you are encouraging virtue when what you are really doing is fostering hypocrisy. You are not educating the masses—you are holding a ruler in one hand and a piece of candy in the other. Molière's Don Juan Tenorio is a revolting spectacle when he bribes a beggar to blaspheme, but morally it is no worse than if he had debauched him for a benediction. Giving with one hand and taking back with the other never appealed to me. Good isn't a seed which you sow with one eye on the harvest. You scatter the seed. Some falls on fertile ground; very well. Some the wind carries away, but you lose nothing. The joy of doing good is in sowing the seed, not in what you think you are going to get out of it.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Do you mean to imply that we are improving the condition of the poor out of selfishness? It is a great deal easier, no doubt, to scatter your seed broadcast than it is first to prepare the ground carefully, and then cultivate it.

MARCHIONESS. Pay no attention to what my brother says. God made him, and he is responsible.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. We are acquainted with your brother's peculiar propensities for doing good.

ASSUMPTION. That wretched drunkard, Cabrera, who is a disgrace to the village, and La Repelona, the miserable female who lives with him, are cases in point. He encourages them and leads them on to make exhibitions of themselves. They drink until they can no longer stand up.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. And because we do not ke liit and decline to assist them while they are in such a condition, they insult us to our faces. That is all your brand of charity amounts to.

MARCHIONESS. It would be a pretty state of affairs if he were intrusted with the morals of the community.

DON HELIODORO. Yes, in your eyes I am a sort of Beast of the Apocalypse, brought up to date. Well, let us divide the Kingdoms of this World, or rather of this village. You take your friends, while I—I will take myself; because I have no friends I can call mine. My friends are their own masters. They think what they like, they say what they like, and they do what they like.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. They drink what they like.

DON HELIODORO. They do, *sí, señora.* They are very particular about that. I do not ask them even to subscribe to my respectability. Liberty is my motto—Liberty!

"Liberté, liberté chérie!"

TERESA *enters.*

TERESA. Doña Esperanza and Assumption!

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Teresita, my child!

ASSUMPTION. My dear Teresita!

DOÑA ESPERANZA. You have no idea how delighted we were to hear from your aunt of your marriage to Santo Toribio. We have known him ever since we were girls. You must be the happiest woman in the world. How often I have said to my sister: If I had had a daughter he is the

very husband I should have prayed for! No doubt you realize by this time that poverty was only a passing trial, since it was borne with resignation. In this life we sometimes anticipate our reward.

TERESA. Thanks to my aunt and to you.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. You are looking extremely well.

ASSUMPTION. Divinely! You seem like another person.

TERESA. Thank you so much.

DON HELIODORO. [*Aside to* TERESA] Yes, thank her. If you are divine now and like another person, imagine what you must have looked like before.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. But where is your husband? We wish to congratulate him.

TERESA. He will be here presently. He hurried out to telegraph, and on the way he was to stop at mass.

MARCHIONESS. Yes, Enriquito is with him.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Do you expect to live at Moraleda?

TERESA. Yes, at Moraleda.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. A wise choice. You will find all the conveniences. Your husband's house is magnificent, and the country place simply regal. It is not far away. Of course everything is rather out of repair. When the Marquis lost his first wife, he took no interest in such matters; but now he will have you as an incentive.

DON FRANCISQUITO *enters.*

DON FRANCISQUITO. If you will permit me, ladies....

MARCHIONESS. What is it, Don Francisquito?

DON FRANCISQUITO. Nativity and Martin are waiting down-stairs. They say they are expected by the Señora Marchioness.

MARCHIONESS. Oh, yes! I am to hand them their papers. Ask them to come up—to come up immediately. And tell

them that Doña Esperanza and Doña Assumption are with me.

DON FRANCISQUITO. They know already, Señora Marchioness.

MARCHIONESS. It seems they are really going to be married at last.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. What we have done will be appreciated. We have made no mistake. They are both faithful and industrious, and now that conditions are favorable, everything will be easy if they attend strictly to business.

TERESA. Are you marrying somebody?

MARCHIONESS. Yes, two unfortunates from the village—orphans who have been in our charge; although the girl is not really from this place. Her story sounds more like a novel.

TERESA. Is that so? Do tell me about it.

MARCHIONESS. Here they are. We shall have to wait.

NATIVITY *and* MARTIN *enter.*

MARCHIONESS. Come in, come right in. There is nobody here but the family. My niece, the Marchioness of Santo Toribio....

NATIVITY. Señorita Teresa? She was in the village a long while ago; she was a little girl then. She came one day with the Marchioness and another lady to visit the asylum.

TERESA. Yes, my mother.

MARCHIONESS. You certainly have a good memory. You were only a mite at the time.

NATIVITY. I remember it perfectly.

TERESA. I remember now. Of course—and they told me your story. I was tremendously affected by it, although it had slipped my mind until you spoke. I remember—you are the girl some sailors from the village rescued from a wreck.

NATIVITY. I am, señora.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. This girl and a poor woman who had a tiny baby boy clasped in her arms, were the only ones that were saved. The woman died soon afterward, but they managed to preserve the boy's life. It took place on a Christmas afternoon, so when we had the children confirmed, we changed their names to commemorate the event, and called them Nativity and Jesus.

TERESA. Is this the young man?

NATIVITY. No—no, señora.

MARCHIONESS. No, the boy was saved from the wreck, but he has since come to shipwreck in life. Nativity has always been docile and willing, appreciative of what has been done for her. I do not say this because she is present—but whatever good qualities she has possessed the boy has made up for in surliness and rebellion. He ran away from the asylum when he was eight years old. You cannot expect me to remember all his escapades since. We were sorry when his turn came to be released on parole and he was put to work outside. He is little better now than one of the wicked. Sometimes he runs away from the village, nobody knows where; and the next thing you hear he is back again.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. So you see we have nothing more to do with him.

ASSUMPTION. He is a fine specimen.

TERESA. But were any of your family lost in the wreck?

NATIVITY. I can't say, señora; I don't remember. I was only three years old at the time.

MARCHIONESS. They were crossing in an old sailing vessel from Orán. There were ten or twelve in the party—a troupe of acrobats, as we learned from the boy's mother.

TERESA. The boy who was saved with you then was not your brother?

NATIVITY. No, señora—no.

MARCHIONESS. They were not brother and sister.

DON HELIODORO. Otherwise they could not have been engaged.

MARCHIONESS. This is no time to bring up that subject again. The boy's head was filled with wild notions, and he got the idea that Nativity and he had been destined for each other—that is how he expressed it, predestined for each other. He had been reading cheap novels, you know, and murder stories in the newspapers, so he got the idea that destiny had joined them together, and that no power on earth could put them asunder.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Poor Nativity! Rather than marry that scamp, it would have been better if she had never been saved.

TERESA. Is this young man your fiancé?

MARTIN. At your service, señorita.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. He is quite different; he is honorable and a hard worker. Both have employment—she is a laundress; he is a carpenter. He works in our leading carpenter's shop; she has a laundry which we have fitted up for her in wonderful style. They will be very successful, as they are well liked by everybody.

NATIVITY. Thanks to you.

MARTIN. Thanks to you, ladies.

MARCHIONESS. I suppose that people will still say that women's clubs do no good.

TERESA. Do you expect to be married soon?

NATIVITY. Next week. The final banns will be published on Sunday.

TERESA. I must send you a present—something useful for the house. Let me know what you need.

NATIVITY. Thank you, señorita, but we have everything.

The ladies are so kind. Anything at all will do, señorita; you are so kind.

TERESA. I shall make inquiries.

MARCHIONESS. I am glad that you came while Doña Esperanza and Doña Assumption were with us. Although I am president, they are much more active than I.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. No indeed! All we ever do, Marchioness, is carry out your wishes.

MARCHIONESS. Come into the study where Don Franciscquito has the papers. He will give them to you. Martin need only sign his name a couple of times in order to make everything regular; then all you will lack will be a blessing.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. They will make an attractive couple.

TERESA. Yes, very interesting.—I don't know why, but somehow I find myself thinking of the other.

DON HELIODORO. Just like she is; depend upon it.

TERESA. Do you mean?....

DON HELIODORO. Surely.

TERESA. That is even more interesting.

MARCHIONESS. But we are losing time.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Lead the way, Marchioness.

MARCHIONESS. Come with me.

NATIVITY. With your permission.

MARTIN. With your permission, ladies....

All retire with the exception of DON HELIODORO *and* TERESA.

DON HELIODORO. Did you hear what they said about poor Jesus? There is not one word of truth in it, as usual. They merely expect a complete surrender in return for their favors. It is a new form of slavery. Men are not men, they are abstractions—so many souls to be saved. As far as the man is concerned, he can go to the devil! We have souls,

but there is a considerable admixture of bone and flesh, of nerves that tingle, and blood that boils—we are alive—and life means struggle, rebellion. At the first harmless prank they regarded the boy with suspicion. Distrust and repression were the correctives employed. Naturally the rebellion increased, until it terminated in open war. The boy is not bad, but by treating him as if he were, they will make him so. He is in love with this girl. There is a touch of the theatric in his infatuation, it is true, of the language of the *folletins* which he has been reading; and it is ridiculous—I was the first to laugh at him—but at bottom his attachment is sincere, even passionate. And the girl loves him, only she is afraid. She is prepared to accept a husband like any other alms which they offer, because it is not proper to refuse. Poor people cannot afford to refuse charity; it seems ungrateful. But a husband is not a form of charity. Don't say now that I am talking. Hasn't a man a right to talk when he sees things which make his blood boil? You know what they did to you.

TERESA. To me?

DON HELIODORO. Yes, and you know it. They were not satisfied to give you bread, they wanted to secure your virtue and save your soul. They had very little confidence in you, and none at all that any young man would be found who would be willing to offer you his love, because they knew that you were poor—they may have been right, too—young men to-day are very shy about love; they are afraid. It might embarrass them afterward in the struggle for life—and they may be right about that. Life is exacting and hard nowadays, and it is terribly severe with the man who refuses to accept things as they are, but spends his time gazing up at the stars or listening idly to the songs of nightingales.

TERESA. But what have I to complain of since you admit yourself that they are right?

DON HELIODORO. Yes, yes, of course they are right! Only I cannot resign myself to this sort of right. It is not my conception of life. The struggle for life never engrossed me; it has always been the struggle against life when its conditions became insupportable. That is how I come to be living here upon charity, but refusing to abdicate, like a king who has been conquered but not humiliated, and who will never surrender his throne for all the powers of this world. Like the fallen angel, I stand alone, preferring to be a devil to an angel who has repented and been forgiven. I am solitary and great in my inferno, which explains why it is that I can afford to tell you that it was a sin to marry you to that old egotist, who cares nothing for you except as a trustworthy nurse for his children, and a reliable housekeeper to look after his house; that is why I can tell you that it is a crime to join these young people together, whose sense of obligation is so great that they do not even dare admit to themselves that they are not in love.

TERESA. Why should they not be in love? Come, dear uncle, you were always a little romantic yourself. Admit that all these stories of shipwrecks on Christmas eve, of acrobats and orphans snatched from the storm, have induced you to compose a little novel or melodrama of your own, which this prosaic ending with a wedding will spoil completely. The girl seems very happy to me.

DON HELIODORO. She is exactly as happy as you are.

TERESA. You seem determined to drag me into it.

DON HELIODORO. Do you mean to tell me that you are in love with your husband?

TERESA. I mean to tell you that it was no sacrifice for me to marry him.

DON HELIODORO. Because you had never been in love, and you have not the slightest idea now what love means—what true love means. Who knows? It may come to-day.

TERESA. What are you talking about?

DON HELIODORO. Sometimes it seems as if the realities of life had crushed out the ideal; but only the ideal is eternal, and it asserts itself in the end. In a day, in an hour, it turns topsy-turvy the best regulated and most tranquil of lives, which had seemed secure from all folly or passion which might ruffle their calm.

TERESA. I have no fear that folly or passion will ever disturb my life.

DON HELIODORO. They will some day—perhaps it will be only a great longing which takes possession of your soul, and you will not know the reason; but it will be the ideal, the ideal which sooner or later exacts its part in our lives.

NATIVITY *re-enters.*

NATIVITY. Excuse me.... May I speak with the Señora Marchioness?

DON HELIODORO. What is the matter? You seem frightened.

TERESA. What has happened?

NATIVITY. I am very much frightened, *sí, señora.* The ladies handed us the papers; they were as kind as they could be, God reward them for it. Martin and I left the house together, both so happy, and bade each other good-by on the corner. He went to his shop and I turned back to my laundry, but no sooner was I alone than Jesus appeared and threw himself across my path, and began to talk to me as if he were crazy. I never saw him like that before; he always seemed resigned. I thought he had forgotten me, but now he says that he is going to kill us, that he is going to kill

himself. I am sure that he is crazy. He wanted to come here, too, to insult the ladies. I was so frightened that I began to run, and I ran back to the house, and I know that he is following me, although I didn't dare to look behind, because I could hear him muttering all the while and swearing that he would kill us, and kill himself, and kill those old busybodies—the busybodies were the ladies, God forgive him! It was the same thing over and over. He is crazy. I know that he is crazy. They must be prepared for it....

DON HELIODORO. The melodrama and the novel! What did I tell you?

TERESA. One moment, Nativity. Did you ever love Jesus?

NATIVITY. Of course I did! We were brought up together, we were saved from the wreck together, our names were always spoken as one, and we were both alone in the world, dependent upon alms—charity was all that we had. But he has turned bad, he has become ungrateful....

TERESA. Is he really as bad as they say?

NATIVITY. Oh, yes, señora! He always wants to have his own way. He is rebellious and a bad Christian; he says terrible things. He ran away from the asylum once, and went about among the towns and villages, fighting bulls. Another time he ran away with some acrobats.

DON HELIODORO. Naturally, you were born into the profession. Didn't you ever feel like turning a few somersaults yourself?

NATIVITY. I? Oh, no, sir! But when he was little I have often heard it said that all his bones were out of joint.

TERESA. How dreadful! He should have been punished severely.

DON HELIODORO. Yes, indeed; and it was worse yet when he took to dislocating heads and hearts.

TERESA. Tell me, was there anything else that was wrong that poor Jesus did?

NATIVITY. Oh, yes, señorita! A great many things. One day he was drunk in the streets with Cabrera and La Repelona, and roused the whole village shouting blasphemies. The ladies would have nothing more to do with him after that, although until then they had always forgiven him.

DON HELIODORO. In the heat of improvisation some stories came out which were of interest to the ladies. La Repelona is pretty well informed about what is going on. So a council was convened and he was excommunicated.

TERESA. So now you do not love Jesus?

NATIVITY. Love him? Yes, and I always shall. I am awfully sorry to have it like this, but things are different now; he knows that I am to be married, and he will have to give me up. Only think what might have happened if Martin had seen us together! It would have been dreadful. Men are so excitable, and although Martin is cautious, Jesus would have insulted him. I was terribly frightened, señorita, and I want the Marchioness to know all about it so that they can put fear into the heart of Jesus, and it will never happen again.

TERESA. It certainly must be done.

The voice of the SERVANT *is heard outside in altercation with* JESUS, CABRERA, *and* LA REPELONA.

NATIVITY. *Dios mío!*

TERESA. What? Who are these people?

DON HELIODORO. Never mind who they are. There is no cause for alarm. They are friends of mine. Here comes Jesus with Cabrera and La Repelona, who is his mistress. Come in, come right in! While I am here it will be perfectly safe. Have no fear.

JESUS, CABRERA, *and* LA REPELONA *enter.*

REPELONA. Good morning, everybody.

CABRERA. Good morning, Don Heliodoro and company.

JESUS. Good morning.

DON HELIODORO. Hello, hello! To what are we indebted for the honor of this visit of the most notable rogues of this virtuous community?

JESUS. We asked for you, Don Heliodoro, so as to be able to get in; but what we want is to see the Marchioness and the other ladies of the Junta. I have something to say to them. I don't know what these people want.

REPELONA. I want my rights, and to let people know who is who, so that the ladies can tell what they are doing and not be deceived, and who it is they are trying to help, for they are preyed upon now by a brood of vipers, who make them see white as black, the hypocrites and scum of the village that they are; and they are the people who go about plastering sins upon everybody so as to make it appear that they are virtuous, and have the ladies listen to them, and to nobody else. They are frauds and deceivers, and they find out when it is the ladies go to church, so that they can be there before them, and beat themselves on the breast and kiss the ground, and then they go out and do afterward.... Aha! I could tell you what they do afterward! I wonder if they think nobody knows who they are? It would be a good deed, too, to run them down and expose them one by one in their shame, and drag them out onto the streets in the broad light of day—and I am the one that is going to do it, too! Take Cacharrero's old woman, she talks the most—I will take her—dressed up in the robe of a penitent last Good Friday like a Nazarene, when what she ought to have been doing was running the gauntlet! I will take her! There is not another hussy so foul in the village, no, nor in hell either, for that matter; you can take it from me.

TERESA. What a horrible woman! I believe she is dangerous.

DON HELIODORO. [*To* LA REPELONA] Yes, yes, we agree with you. But repress your just rage and give the men a chance to talk. Cabrera, your fame has passed the limits of this village. If I am right you are the third of your line?

CABRERA. *Sí, señor*, most excellent Señor Don Heliodoro, I am Cabrera the Third, at your service and the company's, not to speak of the most excellent señorita's, as lovely as can be. One of your most excellent family, eh, Don Heliodoro? Is it so?

DON HELIODORO. She is my niece.

CABRERA. May she long continue so!

DON HELIODORO. But we are wandering from the subject. You were saying that you were the third of your line.

CABRERA. *Sí, señor*, most excellent Don Heliodoro. You knew us all. My father was a great drinker, and my grandfather was a great drinker. My grandfather served in the army under the most excellent general, Don Ramón Cabrera. This white cap belonged to the most excellent general; he gave it to my grandfather.

DON HELIODORO. I see: this cap belonged to the general, it was white, and he gave it to you.

CABRERA. It was a mistake that I was not a soldier; I was born to make war. What can a man do in peace but stagnate? Drink is the only relief. I drink, I don't stagnate. People ought to remember. They call me a drunkard when I am not. A drunkard drinks for the sake of drink, but that is no way to do. La Repelona here, is a drunkard, and she has gotten an ill name for us with the most excellent ladies of the most excellent Junta. I only give them their due; I suffer abuse with moderation. I am a martyr to my principles, like my grandfather.

TERESA. Oh, uncle! These people frighten me.

NATIVITY. Señorita, ask them to go away.

DON HELIODORO. They amuse me. Jesus, what have you to say for yourself?

JESUS. Nothing. What do you want me to say? I have come to tell the Señora Marchioness and the other ladies and gentlemen of the Junta that I will do whatever they wish—I will go to work at whatever they put me. It is not my fault that I am slow at work. What I like is to put to sea and to wander over the earth, but I will do what they tell me, and you know it. And that ends it. I never did anything but run away twice, and both times it was because they said I was no good, and I wanted to see if I wasn't some good and try myself out in the world. One day I had been drinking when I wasn't used to it, and I met these people, and we said things, and then the ladies heard of it; that is the only wrong I ever did, so now they treat me worse than if I were a thief, and they will not have me around. Now the captains of all the boats are afraid to take me for fear of offending the owners, so I have had to take to smuggling with the Pimentóns, who are the only ones who have any use for me. Then everybody says that I keep bad company, that I am in a bad business. I know it is a bad business, and some day the guard will catch us, and we will all be shot—and we will be lucky too to be shot —otherwise they will put us in jail. But what is a man to do? I want the ladies and gentlemen to forgive me, and here I am, and I am ready to do what they say, you know that, if only they will tell me.

DON HELIODORO. [*To* TERESA] Was I right?

TERESA. If he is telling the truth. Do you hear, Nativity?

NATIVITY. [*Bursting into tears*] I am awfully sorry.

JESUS. You are crying because you know that I am telling the truth. You are afraid; you always said that you loved

me, and now you don't dare to say it; but I will make you say it. You will have to say it! You are going to say it yet!

NATIVITY. Señorita! I am so frightened!—The Señora Marchioness!....

The MARCHIONESS *re-enters with* DOÑA ESPERANZA *and* ASSUMPTION.

MARCHIONESS. What is the matter? What is the meaning of this? [*To* NATIVITY] Are you here again? And what are you doing here? Who are these people?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. I never heard of such impudence.

ASSUMPTION. What shameless effrontery!

MARCHIONESS. [*To* HELIODORO] Needless to say you are responsible.

DON HELIODORO. Yes, I am. The least that we can do is to hear what they have to say. Jesus asks pardon.

MARCHIONESS. It was high time. Enough has been pardoned him already.

DON HELIODORO. We can never pardon enough.

MARCHIONESS. We are aware what his repentance amounts to. [*To* LA REPELONA *and* CABRERA] Well, what do you want? Do you come here with the same old story? Whenever you are in trouble you appeal to us, repentant and humble, and pretend that you never wanted to live with this man. You ask us to take you away and lend you our protection, but as soon as we do, you return to live in sin again, and become the public shame of the village.

CABRERA. Most excellent Señora Marchioness—I say this with all respect to the most excellent Señora Marchioness and to the most excellent other ladies—this idea of separating two people who live together exactly as if they were man and wife....

MARCHIONESS. That will do, that will do! We don't care to hear the details.

REPELONA. But Señora Marchioness, I can't help it; it isn't my fault that we are not married. Nobody knows where my husband is—he has been gone these ten years, and never said one word to me about it. At this moment I couldn't tell you whether he was dead or alive. What is a woman to do?

MARCHIONESS. We don't care to hear.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Live decently and obey the commandments.

REPELONA. So I do live decently. No one can say that I run about with everybody, like some other people....

DOÑA ESPERANZA. I thought so. More of your gossip! Drag in all those old stories.

REPELONA. *Sí, señora,* they are stories—stories about those women who deceive you because they look like saints on the outside. I could tell you some things about your friends, too, who belong to this Junta. I know some things about them. They are not all like you are. Ask Don Gumersindo's wife why it is that she goes in the afternoons to see La Cacharrera? Some afternoons she does and some she does not, because the house has two doors, and they open on two streets, and I could tell you who it is that goes in at the other.

MARCHIONESS. That will do, that will do! We have already heard sufficient.

REPELONA. How about the judge's wife?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Great heavens! I always thought that at least she was respectable.

REPELONA. She is a saint. Believe me, a saint! That is the kind you help with your charity, the ones who know how to lie and cheat best; and those of us who dare to speak

out our minds, we are the bad ones. Whoever it was that turned you against us, is going to get a piece of my mind —she is going to hear things! Whoever meddles with my mother's daughter settles with me.

MARCHIONESS. [*Calling*] Don Francisco! Pedro! Come quickly! Put these people out. [*To* DON HELIODORO] Well? What are you doing?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. We don't care to hear!

ASSUMPTION. How can such people be?

JESUS. All the same she knows what she is talking about. You don't want to hear the truth, but you have no right to do what you are doing. You have no right! This girl shall never marry Martin, because I say so. She shall never marry any one but me!

NATIVITY. Señora Marchioness!

MARCHIONESS. [*To* JESUS] We shall attend to your case. You will hear from the Judge and the *Guardia civil.*

JESUS. What shall I hear? Will they turn me out of the village? But I will go myself first— I will sooner go myself! But you will hear from me before I go——

MARCHIONESS. Unspeakable insolence!

DOÑA ESPERANZA. He threatens us!

MARCHIONESS. Where are the servants? Don Francisquito!

DON FRANCISQUITO *and a* SERVANT *enter. Simultaneously the* MARQUIS *and* ENRIQUE *appear at another door.*

DON FRANCISQUITO. Señora Marchioness!

MARQUIS. Aunt!

ENRIQUE. Mamma!

MARCHIONESS. Run! Put these people out!

DOÑA ESPERANZA. I never saw such an exhibition. Marquis, what an occasion on which to congratulate you!

MARQUIS. Doña Esperanza and Assumption——

DON FRANCISQUITO. Move along now! You don't want us to use force. Get out!

REPELONA. Yes, we will move along. But you will hear from us! We are going to have our say somewhere.

CABRERA. Martyrs submit to abuse with resignation.

JESUS. And you—do you hear? You will never marry Martin.

DON FRANCISQUITO. Silence all of you! To the street to get drunk! Shout there as much as you like.... To the street, I tell you!

JESUS, LA REPELONA, CABRERA, DON FRANCISQUITO *and the* SERVANT *retire in confusion, all talking at the same time.*

MARCHIONESS. Now I hope you are satisfied.

NATIVITY. Oh, Señorita!

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Put it out of your mind. His case will receive attention.

MARQUIS. Ungrateful people, eh? I thought so. Unappreciative of what has been done for them.

ASSUMPTION. Judge for yourself.

MARCHIONESS. [*To* DON HELIODORO] Of course you are at the bottom of it.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Yes, you! You!

ASSUMPTION. You urge them on.

MARCHIONESS. You revel in their shame, you lead them into our presence, you lure them into temptation—as if they had not already temptation enough!

DON HELIODORO. I do, eh? Come, come, I don't want to disgrace myself, but discomfort for discomfort, I prefer the headaches I suffer to the pain which you give me. Good day, ladies. [*Goes out.*

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Nativity is fainting.

MARCHIONESS. No wonder—after the shock. He threatened her.

ASSUMPTION. Pay no attention to what he said. He will learn what is good for him.

MARQUIS. Doing good is nothing but one annoyance after another.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. You have no conception of it, my dear Marquis. When we appear on the street, this hussy will be lying in wait for us, to fling it in our teeth.

MARQUIS. You must allow me to come along.

ASSUMPTION. Yes; come, Nativity.... Get the child something.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. A cup of tea.

MARCHIONESS. Take her into the dining-room. Bring medicine.

MARQUIS. Disgusting!

All retire with the exception of TERESA *and* ENRIQUE, *who linger as if by chance.*

ENRIQUE. Well, you heard all of it.

TERESA. Yes; and I am awfully sorry. Poor fellow! He may be bad, but when you listen to him it doesn't seem possible.

ENRIQUE. No, it doesn't. I agree with you. I think that Jesus is the one who ought to marry Nativity. It would be more appropriate.

TERESA. Yes....but you know all life is not like that.

ENRIQUE. There are many charming things about life.

TERESA. Do you think so?

ENRIQUE. You, for instance.

TERESA. Why, cousin! Ha, ha, ha!

ENRIQUE. No, no! Hush! Now don't you repeat what I said.

TERESA. To nobody; don't you worry. It can remain a secret between us. Don't you think it is charming to have secrets?

ENRIQUE. Charming? Very.

Curtain

THE SECOND ACT

The garden of the house of the MARCHIONESS OF CASA MOLINA. *An iron fence at the rear, in the middle of which is a gate. There are two armchairs and six smaller wicker chairs. It is day.*

DON FRANCISQUITO *is seated in one of the armchairs, fast asleep. A book lies open upon his knees. Presently* DON HELIODORO *enters from the opposite side of the garden.*

DON HELIODORO. [*Calling*] Don Francisquito! Don Francisquito! Don Francisquito....quito....quito....quito....

DON FRANCISQUITO. [*Waking up*] Eh? Ah! Don Heliodoro——

DON HELIODORO. Taking a siesta?

DON FRANCISQUITO. No, I was reading, as you see. A most interesting book.... It is too hot in my room.

DON HELIODORO. So it is in mine. The only comfortable rooms in the house are those reserved for guests. We poor sinners are allowed to mortify ourselves. Frizzling here and the mosquito bites will be credited to us hereafter.

DON FRANCISQUITO. Don Heliodoro, why will you be so sacrilegious? You were not always an unbeliever.

DON HELIODORO. No, but that was when I had money. What do you expect? When a man has money he can believe in anything. By the way, that reminds me....

DON FRANCISQUITO. Speaking of money? I know what you are going to say.

DON HELIODORO. Yes, I went without my siesta so as to find you alone. Whenever you suspect that I have occa-

sion for a word or two, you slip through my fingers like an eel.

DON FRANCISQUITO. So as to avoid discussion.

DON HELIODORO. Discussion! Discussion! You are the one who could avoid discussion. Come, Don Francisquito, let us not have any discussion to-day. I feel sure that we will not have any.

DON FRANCISQUITO. No, sir, we will not. Once for all, I might as well tell you in plain terms—no, no, no!

DON HELIODORO. Now you are beginning the discussion. No! no! You always say the same thing.

DON FRANCISQUITO. Because you always ask the same thing—money, money.

DON HELIODORO. Money? Anybody would think to hear you talk.... Money? An advance of fifteen duros, a trifling advance?

DON FRANCISQUITO. But, Don Heliodoro, we have not reached the fifteenth. Is it possible that you have spent your entire allowance?

DON HELIODORO. Don Francisquito, I am willing to take a great deal from you, but, remember, I can never consent to call that pittance an allowance. Forty dollars an allowance?

DON FRANCISQUITO. Yes, but forty dollars in two weeks. How is it possible to spend so much in this place?

DON HELIODORO. It isn't that I spend it in this place. I spend it on myself, for my own purposes—which I consider a capital investment. It would be the same anywhere. Lucullus eats only at the table of Lucullus; Heliodoro lives only to himself, not in this village nor in that. It is I; I am the man.

DON FRANCISQUITO. Now you are joking. Let us not descend to that level. You know that the Marchioness has

forbidden me to lend you money, or to make you any advance.

DON HELIODORO. What necessity is there of her knowing anything about it?

DON FRANCISQUITO. A nice question for you to ask, when you are always the one who lets her know.

DON HELIODORO. I? I? Do I tell her that you advance me money?

DON FRANCISQUITO. No, it isn't necessary to tell her. Do you think that anybody needs to be told when you have money? It is the same thing every month: from the first to the tenth the going is bad; from the tenth to the fifteenth, days of bonanza!

DON HELIODORO. As the weather man has it, fair and warmer.

DON FRANCISQUITO. If I relax a little, from the fifteenth to the twentieth increasing cloudiness, followed by storms, hurricanes, and high seas. I have made up my mind this month, in so far as it is in my control, that we are going to have settled weather.

DON HELIODORO. You are a Gracián when it comes to constructing allegories. However, to reconsider....

DON FRANCISQUITO. No, no! Not to-day. If you insist, I shall speak to the Marchioness. This month, no advance.

DON HELIODORO. But Don Francisquito, we are talking at cross-purposes. We have not the same thing in mind. I have been unlucky this month at the Club; I have lost abominably at *tresillo*. I have debts—gaming debts. You know gaming debts are debts of honor.

DON FRANCISQUITO. Is that so? When you play with me, you never pay when you lose. Where are those four duros you owe me from the other night?

DON HELIODORO. Exactly what I say. Gaming debts are

sacred. Don't make me blush for four duros. Let me have twenty, and out of the surplus I'll pay you on the spot.

DON FRANCISQUITO. Come, Don Heliodoro, what is the use of wasting time over this foolishness? If you can get along with ten pesetas, I can let you have them, and not as an advance either, but out of my own pocket—ten pesetas which you are at liberty to add to that sacred debt of honor.

DON HELIODORO. Ten pesetas? I have not fallen so low. No, no, keep your ten pesetas. Ah, Heliodoro, Heliodoro, you never expected this! This is the last degradation! Give me twenty-five anyway; it is only fifteen more, and it won't be such a humiliation.

DON FRANCISQUITO. Don Heliodoro, ten are all I have. Believe me....

DON HELIODORO. Never mind; let us not get into another discussion. Hand over the ten pesetas. I must drain the cup. Now you owe me fifteen. Somehow or other when we leave off you always owe me money.

DON FRANCISQUITO. Not a hint to the Marchioness, whatever happens.

DON HELIODORO. On ten pesetas? Who do you think I am? It is like chaining an eagle in a dungeon underground.

TERESA *enters.*

TERESA. Hello, uncle!

DON HELIODORO. Couldn't you sleep either? What disturbed your siesta?

TERESA. I never take one.

DON HELIODORO. No, your husband won't let you. He snores terribly—I can hear him now. By the way, since we are alone, how I do detest your husband!

TERESA. For heaven's sake, uncle, how can you say such a thing? Besides, we are not alone.

DON HELIODORO. Oh, Don Francisquito is in the secret!

He is in all the secrets—secret service. His post is at the keyhole.

DON FRANCISQUITO. Don Heliodoro! Fortunately, the Marchioness does not believe what you say.

DON HELIODORO. No; we understand each other, Don *Suave*—which is what I call him. It is too bad to see such exceptional diplomatic ability wasted in this back country.

DON FRANCISQUITO. Now, Don Heliodoro....

DON HELIODORO. I leave it to you whether striking a balance between the ten or twelve ladies who buzz about this community, is not more difficult than to preserve the equilibrium of Europe.

DON FRANCISQUITO. I must retire now, Señora Marchioness. We all know Don Heliodoro.... [*Goes out.*

DON HELIODORO. A fool and his money are soon parted. However, let us return to your husband.

TERESA. Uncle, you are perfectly outrageous.

DON HELIODORO. Stop! I know that you agree with me, otherwise I should say nothing. I cannot abide these people who have only one idea, who lay out their lives in a straight line exactly parallel to that idea, and then pride themselves upon making their conduct conform to it—just as if our ideas were ever anything more than our temperament or convenience. Your husband is disgustingly consistent, naturally; he is all of a piece. He is one of the sort of men who measure even their smiles off upon a scale, so much for their equals, so much for their inferiors, so much for their superiors. How condescending he is to those of us who don't agree with him! He seems to be saying: Unfortunately, I have to put up with you here, but hereafter—you will be in hell while I shall be in glory, with my robes pressed and gold shoes on. Class distinction, you see. The man is insufferable. Give me genuine saints, Saint Francises, Santa

Teresas, Saint Pauls, or otherwise red-hot fanatics who are all passion and fire—Savonarolas, Calvins, Torquemadas, but none of these modern candied Tartuffes, who neither take fire spiritually themselves nor burn us materially—and come armed only with safety-pins! They get on my nerves; they infuriate me. One of them will turn a whole family into purgatory, as I have learned by experience. And imagine how many there must be in the world! They are the people who plume and puff themselves up if you are foolish enough to tolerate them out of good nature. They take your tolerance as a sign of weakness, or else for the respect which is their due. If you oppose them out of the instinct of self-preservation, ah!—they are the first to invoke liberty and the right of free speech, which they detest, and the tolerance which they never practise themselves. Bad stock! Thoroughly bad!

TERESA. You are excited, uncle.

DON HELIODORO. I free my mind because I have suffered a good deal in our family. I will admit that I was foolish and made mistakes when my father died, and I found a fortune on my hands. I had been brought up so strictly, with such severity, that I broke loose as soon as I found myself free, by natural reaction. And the usual thing happened. My will had never been fortified; it had been undermined—according to the orthodox theory of education and government in Spain. I compromised myself horribly. It was a hard lesson, but it might have been profitable if they had only treated me in the right spirit. But not at all; I was regarded as absolutely incapable, and bullied as if I were a child again, when for the first time I was really beginning to be a man. My brother-in-law, the Marquis of Casa Molina, was an exact counterpart of your husband; he was obsessed by his ideas, by his principles. He crippled him-

self to help my brother Ramón, your father—you know what he was—he was no better than I—and he helped me too. But how? He humiliated us in the eyes of the world, he incapacitated us forever from attempting to restore our credit, our fortune. Your father died broken-hearted, while I was forced to leave the woman who was my whole life, I was forced to abandon her with a child who was my idol, my ideal, the hope of my future, and compelled to marry a woman they picked out for me. I don't need to tell you what a success my married life was! They overran me like an invading army in the name of their principles; they ravaged my most private affairs, our home, our hearts. And I, because I had no will of my own at the time, submitted to it meekly. I believed that the honor and good name of our family took precedence of all else, and had to be saved at whatever cost, because they told me so. And they were saved, everything was saved, except the woman I loved and the boy I adored, while I....I am not I any more, because there is nothing left to me which is mine, and I only know that I am the same man when I burst out like this in savage protest, or sometimes in ironic scorn, like the raving of the mad, or in surly rebellion which no doubt seems to them ingratitude, or else with tears in my eyes which well up within me—seldom, very seldom—when I find myself alone, or with some one like you, who can weep with me, and then I feel for both of us, because you have suffered some of the things which I have suffered, and you know how I feel. For you do, my poor girl!

TERESA. I know, uncle, I know. I should never have dared to confess it to any one else. I am dreadfully unhappy!

DON HELIODORO. Didn't I tell you? My poor girl!

ENRIQUE *enters.*

ENRIQUE. Are you here? I thought there was somebody in the garden.

TERESA. You couldn't hear us from your room?

ENRIQUE. No; but I came down out of curiosity. I was hiding—in ambush.

TERESA. In ambush?

DON HELIODORO. There was nothing to ambush.

ENRIQUE. Oh, yes! Something interesting.

TERESA. There was? Tell us, tell us.

ENRIQUE. Since mamma brought Nativity to our house to stay until she is married to Martin, you know that the poor girl has not been out once, so as to avoid any scenes such as we had the other day.

DON HELIODORO. Yes, a sort of anticipatory confinement.

ENRIQUE. And we have heard nothing more about Jesus.

TERESA. No, they say he has gone to Brazil, or some other place.

DON HELIODORO. While they were telling her, I noticed that all the ladies kept their eyes glued upon the girl so as to see how she took it.

TERESA. She took it very calmly.

ENRIQUE. That is what I thought; and the reason was that she knew he was here all the time.

TERESA. No!

ENRIQUE. Wait and see. Of course everybody is in the house taking a siesta in the afternoon.

DON HELIODORO. All respectable people are. Your mother has issued a decree from which, as usual, there is no appeal: "At this hour nobody is permitted in the garden." But we have undertaken to demonstrate that we are permitted here. As with most things which are forbidden, all that you need do is take the dare.

TERESA. Let Enrique finish.

ENRIQUE. I came down here yesterday—for some reason I wasn't able to sleep—and picked up a book.

DON HELIODORO. I know; it was mine. I missed it. By the way, if I were you, I don't think I would show it to my mother.

ENRIQUE. Why, uncle! No, I am sure it wasn't your book....

DON HELIODORO. Oh, very well! It is nothing to me—although I noticed that it was short three or four illustrations.

ENRIQUE. Uncle!

TERESA. What was the book?

DON HELIODORO. Oh, some trash or other—"The Nude in Art"—I forget. Better keep your eye on the pictures, or your mother will confiscate them.

ENRIQUE. You are joking.

DON HELIODORO. However, continue; Teresa doesn't mind.

ENRIQUE. Am I boring you?

DON HELIODORO. No, no; this is interesting.

ENRIQUE. Well, as I say, I was in the dining-room, reading, when all at once I heard footsteps coming very softly in my direction, and I saw Nativity in the garden, looking about cautiously from one side to the other; presently she went to the gate and opened it to admit Jesus, and they both began to talk, and they stayed there talking for half an hour, and when he said good-by....

DON HELIODORO. He gave her a kiss.

ENRIQUE. Were you looking, too?

DON HELIODORO. No, but it was just as good.

TERESA. Why, could you hear?

DON HELIODORO. Yes, the kiss. That was enough for me. So I judged that they were getting along.

ENRIQUE. Yes, for I heard something. He is coming back to-day.

TERESA. To-day?

ENRIQUE. At this hour; that is the reason I hurried down. However, since you were here....

TERESA. We have disturbed the combination? What a pity!

DON HELIODORO. It may not be too late yet. This interests me. Let us separate, each in a different direction. I will pretend that I am going out to the street, and will come back through the carriage-house; you make believe that you are returning into the main house, and then come out and hide wherever you are able. We must see, we must hear....

TERESA. Yes, we must. This interests me.

ENRIQUE. It does me, it does me! It is as good as a novel.

DON HELIODORO. With illustrations. Now separate, and then to your places.

TERESA. Hurry, hurry! I wonder where I can hide?

ENRIQUE. Come with me, I will show you.

TERESA. If we hide together they will be more apt to see us.

ENRIQUE. Not at all; I know some splendid places.

DON HELIODORO. Yes, he knows more than you think.

ENRIQUE. Uncle!

DON HELIODORO. Good-by, then. We meet here to compare observations. I am in my element.

He goes out at the back, while TERESA *and* ENRIQUE *conceal themselves upon the left of the garden. Presently* NATIVITY *enters from the left, toward the rear.* JESUS *appears upon the right.*

JESUS. I was afraid you weren't coming; I thought may be you had deceived me yesterday so as to get me to go away.

NATIVITY. No, there were people in the garden, and I think some one is here now.... No, it's only the young Marchioness; she is nice; she won't say anything. She has been good to me, and I am fond of her. She is kind. But I can't stay long.

JESUS. You can't? Why not? I sail to-night. Have you anything to tell me?

NATIVITY. What should I have to tell you?

JESUS. Something. That you are sorry, that you are glad, whatever you feel. You never say anything.

NATIVITY. What could I say? It isn't true that I am glad. You wouldn't believe me if I said that I was sorry, so it would be the same as if it wasn't true. That is the reason I didn't say anything. It's the best way.

JESUS. We shall never see each other again. I can't believe it—separate, never see each other again, never hear of each other.

NATIVITY. Why can't we hear of each other?

JESUS. Do you think I would write to your house, or that he would let you write to me? No, I take that back; he might let you after all, since he never loved you. He is only marrying you for what he can get out of it.

NATIVITY. I don't believe it. He loves me; we both love each other.

JESUS. You don't; that's a lie—it's a lie! You never spoke to each other alone more than twice in your lives, and so you have always had to say what you thought you ought to. You don't call that love; love is saying everything that you have in your heart, good or bad—the whole of it. But he—what has he ever told you? What do you know about him? What other people have said. That he is honest,

that he is a good worker—and I don't deny it—that he is well-behaved; naturally—the first business they started him at happened to suit. They struck his taste, his ability. Every man is good at something; there must be something, too, that I could do, and I mean to find it. I read once somewhere that the men who have done most in the world, were always stupid and slow at first, and badly thought of, and everybody always believed that they were good for nothing. That was the way with Christopher Columbus, who discovered America; and most of the saints and wise men, when they began, were something terrible.

NATIVITY. You ought not to read such books, Jesus; you would be better off if you hadn't read all those bad things. They have made you what you are.

JESUS. What I am, what I am! God knows what I have done that is too bad to be forgiven. I am no ingrate, and I never was, although people may say so; but I haven't had the chance that you have. Women always seem to fit in better everywhere; and you have always been treated as if you came from this village. But I have always been a stranger—I have come from a great way off, because they knew my mother was from Africa, and because I was born there in Orán, but of Spanish parents, you know that; and when I was a boy they always called me the Moor and the Jew, and the little acrobat, or something of the sort—it was always the same tune: "Blood will tell, blood will tell!" It wasn't so with you; you were so small and pale and golden-haired, that everybody always felt as if you had been born by a miracle out of the sea and the sky, since they didn't know who your mother was, nor whether you had any people, nor where you came from; you were alone, and everybody loved you, but not me—nobody loved me. They ought to have let me drown; that would have been the truest charity.

NATIVITY. You mustn't talk so bitterly. You show that you are ungrateful for what has been done.

JESUS. When you give a man life, and the life is not worth the living, do you do him a favor?

NATIVITY. It is getting late, Jesus. The ladies and gentlemen will be coming out. [*A pause.*

JESUS. When is the wedding?

NATIVITY. Sunday; you know that. You mustn't ask me again. We are not going to talk about it any more.

JESUS. No, nor about anything else—not a thing. I will be far away from here before Sunday. They say that every mile is a year when a man wants to forget. Now I shall find out whether it is true or not.

NATIVITY. I hear some one in the house.

JESUS. How careful you are! If they see me you'll lose your place, I suppose? Well, you won't lose it upon my account. I am too anxious to see you get on.

NATIVITY. Jesus! [*A pause.*

JESUS. No, you will have to be the one to say good-by first. I am not going to say it.

NATIVITY. But don't you see.... You know I love you.

JESUS. What kind of love is it? You don't love me as I love you; I have never looked at another woman in all my life—only you. There has never been any other woman for me—it was as if other women did not exist. I thought God had saved us together never to let us part. Why, if you really loved me—what wouldn't you do, what wouldn't you dare?

NATIVITY. No, don't begin that again, like you did yesterday. That isn't loving me; it is being wicked. What? Run away? Run away like a bad woman? Never, never!

JESUS. You are right. What would the ladies say, and everybody? What could you hope for from me? It would

be too much like trusting yourself in the hands of the Lord, and the Lord doesn't perform miracles every day. He saved us once, and people here have done the rest. Yes, they have! They have given us bread, they have provided us with shelter, and now they say that they have done us good.

NATIVITY. And they have; only you don't know how to appreciate it.

JESUS. I might have once; but now they persecute me, they——

NATIVITY. It may be the best thing that could happen to you. Who knows but that you may be happy yet, and rich?

JESUS. May you never be!

NATIVITY. Is that the way you love me?

JESUS. So that you will always think of me. If you were happy, how would you think of me? You would always say: I did right when I did it, and you would never be sorry.

NATIVITY. That is no way to talk.

JESUS. It is the way I feel. I tell you I feel a great many things which I keep to myself. Come, say good-by, good-by —forever! I shan't say it. Never! Though they pretend I am an unbeliever, I believe in God—and I believe that it will not be forever. I don't know why, but I can't believe it. It is impossible. Come....

NATIVITY. Good-by.

JESUS. No, I am not going to kiss you. Keep your kisses for him. Mine was the first kiss, and it is worth all the others.

He runs out by the gate by which he came in. NATIVITY *remains behind in tears, but retires when she hears the others approaching.*

TERESA *and* ENRIQUE *reappear from the left, and* DON HELIODORO *from the right.*

TERESA. Did you hear what they said?

DON HELIODORO. I did. Did you?

ENRIQUE. Every word. Poor Jesus!

TERESA. Poor Nativity!

ENRIQUE. I am not sorry for her. If she really loved him....

TERESA. What do you know about it? I tell you she is the one I am most sorry for.

DON HELIODORO. I am sorry for both of them—or for neither, unless they accept my advice. I am going to follow Jesus, take him by the hand and reason with him, and then —and then you will see. Oh, you will see!

TERESA. But uncle!

DON HELIODORO. No! Don't look at me. I am sober to-day, and before I am done I may be soberer yet. I can fix this thing, or else nobody can. I feel myself a protecting angel, a benevolent fairy such as you see in the extravaganzas. All I want is a talisman, and there is only one talisman that amounts to anything—money. Money! With ten pesetas that you have borrowed, you can't expect to work miracles. But we shall see what can be done, we shall see—by Heliodoro, the love sprite! Get ready the calciums for the apotheosis. [*Disappears, following* JESUS.

ENRIQUE. He will do something awful.

TERESA. We can't help it; the result will tell. Sense, nonsense—what is the difference? Who knows? The result will tell.

ENRIQUE. I wonder if you were as anxious as I was to have Nativity not be so sensible? You ought to hear mamma and the other ladies—they are so proud of their committee. They believe that the happiness of every one they meet is dependent upon them in this life, besides salvation in the next. What would they say to this? I un-

derstand why the girl is afraid. But what I want to know is who gave them the right to dispose of other people's hearts? Of course, they tell us that they allow them perfect liberty—they are free to do as they please. "We merely suggest, we propose"....

TERESA. Yes, but when you suggest and propose upon the strength of past favors, when the slightest dissent is interpreted as ingratitude, or a hint of refusal as disobedience.... when one is alone in the world, and to refuse is to launch out into the unknown, or, what is worse, into poverty, which is known, where nobody is so strong that he can answer for his conscience or for his acts—Ah! you don't know what a coward it makes of one to be poor, unless you have gone through it—deprived of everything which makes life happy, which puts independence into the heart or courage into the soul to face the grind of every day. From one year's end to the other, it is nothing but struggle and despair. Only those who have been poor can appreciate what it means to succumb, or can sympathize with those who fall by the wayside. No one else has a right to judge.

ENRIQUE. I know. Think what it must mean for a woman who is alone in the world. I can understand why Nativity resigns herself. It is sad to be obliged to resign oneself just as life is beginning, to live only upon memories. The first love should always remain sacred. Don't you think so?

TERESA. The first love?

ENRIQUE. Were you never in love?

TERESA. Enrique!

ENRIQUE. Now don't tell me that your husband was your first love. I don't believe that he was the second, either, although I don't suppose you have loved more than once.

TERESA. Enrique!

ENRIQUE. Your story is the same as Nativity's; that is

the reason you are so much interested in her. You too were saved from a shipwreck. I want you to tell me some day how you ever came to marry your husband. There must be some memory in your life. The first love ought always to be held sacred.

TERESA. Ah! That is what you think. After a few years, I shall want you to tell me whether it is not the one that is most easily forgotten; I am sure I don't know. When I was old enough to have my first love, our life at home was one long series of misfortunes. Nobody even suggested love to me. I was not a good match for men of my own class; I was too far above the others—I was a lady in reduced circumstances. I did not attract my equals, and the rest were ashamed to offer to share their poverty with me. And to tell the truth, what with being too calculating or too timid, they scarcely inspired love. So the first love, which you say should remain sacred, never existed for me. I can never have that memory, and if I have never had that memory, much less can I ever have hope.

ENRIQUE. Hope! I have no hope, and yet I am young—just like you.

TERESA. Like me? You are a child.

ENRIQUE. I am an old man. Life is nothing but a memory to me.

TERESA. You amuse me. I told you that I was going to ask you about that memory within a few years—a very few years—when there are other flowers in the garden, which are not these flowers, but just like them, other white and blue butterflies which are like these—but not the same.

ENRIQUE. But I....I will be the same.

TERESA. Yes, you and the garden. I know; but other flowers will have bloomed in your heart, other butterflies have fluttered through your brain.

ENRIQUE. Butterflies? No—look, look! It is a bee which is hovering above our heads. A bad sign!

TERESA. Are you superstitious? No, it is not a bad sign when it is out-of-doors; it is only bad when it comes into the room and buzzes about our ears. It is not a bad sign here at all. I never saw so many white and blue butterflies.

ENRIQUE. White butterflies bring good news. Are you expecting any?

TERESA. I? From whom? Where would it come from? Oh, yes! I am expecting a letter. A letter. . . .

ENRIQUE. From whom?

TERESA. From my children—no, my little sisters, the little girls. I sent them a letter to the school which must have made them happy. Poor dears, I know how they feel. People always tell children stories about stepmothers which are horrible! I suppose some one has told them that now they have a stepmother so as to make them uncomfortable. They wrote such a doleful letter to their father, but I sat down at once and wrote the dearest reply—I put all my heart into it—and now I am expecting them to send me lots of kisses, and call me dear mamma, their own dear mamma. Now, see if they don't. I am sure it will come to-day; I see so many white butterflies.

ENRIQUE. What do blue butterflies bring?

TERESA. We used to think, when I was a child at school, that they were messengers from the dead who loved us in this life and were in heaven—that they came from the souls of the blest. In cemeteries you always find clouds of blue butterflies.

ENRIQUE. If that is true, when you come here again—after a little while, a very little while—you will see clouds of blue butterflies.

TERESA. Ha, ha! You are not thinking of dying, cousin?

ENRIQUE. Don't laugh at me. You think that I am only a boy. Do you suppose that I have no feeling, that my life is not sad? I know what it is to love, although I may not be loved in return.

TERESA. I see; the first love which must always remain sacred. Who is she? Who is she? Are you afraid to tell me?

ENRIQUE. Don't laugh at me.

TERESA. Laugh at you? Never! I never laugh when others are unhappy. But you will forget, I promise you.

ENRIQUE. How do you know that I will forget?

TERESA. The first? Yes, Enrique, you will soon learn how little it signifies in your life—a memory as meaningless as the white butterflies which bring letters from absent friends, or the blue butterflies which are messengers of the blest. You are young yet, but you will learn. The first love? Of course you will forget!

ENRIQUE. I wish you had felt it; then we should see if you did not remember forever.

TERESA. Do you mean the first love? There is a better love than the first, Enrique, the love that we never forget—it is the last!

ENRIQUE. Teresa!

TERESA. No! Look out! Drive him away! Don't you see?—the bee buzzing again in my ear. Drive it away!

ENRIQUE. The bee! Doña Esperanza and Assumption in the garden.... A bad sign! And a bad time!

DOÑA ESPERANZA *and* ASSUMPTION *enter.*

DOÑA ESPERANZA. A pleasant afternoon, Teresita. Adios, Enrique.

TERESA. A very pleasant afternoon.

ENRIQUE. Ladies....

ASSUMPTION. I suppose the Marchioness is taking a siesta?

TERESA. Yes. We are expecting her at any moment.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. We came early so as to have an opportunity to see your aunt before the meeting of the Junta, and decide who is to have charge of the Charity Table during the *novena* of La Buena Esperanza. If we wait until the Junta meets, it will result in dissension. Some women are never content unless they have a finger in everything, not to speak of the liberty they take of asking questions.

ASSUMPTION. It is only natural that people should prefer the hour of high mass, especially when there are young girls in the family who wish to show themselves off and flirt with the men.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. That is precisely the reason that we are anxious to have one of our friends in charge of the table, such as the Marchioness or yourself, if you would be so good as to assist your aunt.

TERESA. With great pleasure.

ASSUMPTION. The point is to appeal to the men, and ladies such as your aunt, who are familiar with and respected by the substantial element—by those who are the best to do—accomplish more at the hour of service when there are most men in the church. The boys do nothing but flit in and out and smile at the girls. The most that they ever give is a couple of pesetas—poor things!—when they are forced into a corner, and then you have to hold them up. Probably one of them will turn out to be counterfeit.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Last year we foolishly assigned the service to Don Casimiro's family. Apart from the scandal they created by appearing in costumes which would have attracted attention at a bull-fight, before they were done they cost us over two hundred *reals*.

ASSUMPTION. Not to mention the fact that Father Michael selected that day to denounce in his sermon women who

painted, and the congregation all turned and stared at them, so that they were offended, and said that he had no business to notice such things in the pulpit. Poor Father Michael, as he told us later, never dreamed that there were any women who painted in the village, which was the reason he chose the subject for his sermon, so as not to give offense.

[*A long pause.*

DOÑA ESPERANZA. What time is it? We must not be too late for the Junta.

ENRIQUE. Shall I tell mamma that you are here?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. No, no; don't disturb yourself. We can wait. [*To* TERESA] I am glad to find an opportunity, however, of talking with you. I have something to tell you which I should not like to say before your aunt.

TERESA. Something to tell me?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Of course you know how fond I am of you. Whatever I say, you will understand is dictated only by the kindliest motives.

TERESA. Surely. Can I have done anything wrong without thinking, without my aunt having noticed it? I am certain that she would have spoken of it.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Your aunt? In confidence, my dear, your aunt was the one who asked us to speak to you.

TERESA. I am sorry that she has so little confidence in me.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Whatever you do, don't let her know that we have said anything. Your aunt is afraid that she has said too much already—she does not wish to annoy you—and the very first thing that she made us promise was never to let you know that she had said anything. However, I am not good at deceit; I feel that my face gives me away.

TERESA. But what have I done? I want you to tell me plainly.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. You are very young, Teresa. Of course you have been brought up in the modern mode; you do not attach the same importance as we do to a great many things —which no doubt proves your good intentions. But the world, my dear, cannot judge by intentions. It judges by the evidence, by what it sees....

TERESA. But what have I done?

ASSUMPTION. It is not so bad as that. There is a good deal of talk about your bathing at nine o'clock in the morning. No lady bathes at that hour. It seems conspicuous.

TERESA. I like to swim when the beach is not crowded and I can have plenty of room. Bathing is an exercise to me; my father brought me up to it. As a child, I was very timid about the water, but my father was a man who could never tolerate fear.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Your father's tastes were rather exotic. There are many things of which women should cultivate a wholesome fear. Believe me, my dear, at least one-half of virtue is fear.

ENRIQUE. Be careful! After this, you had better bathe at eleven, and hold tight fast to the life-line; then whenever a wave comes, give a piercing shriek and jump up and down —which is impeccable. There is little to see on the beach at eleven, but there is plenty to hear.

ASSUMPTION. I am surprised at Enrique; he appears to have forgotten himself. It is fortunate that your mother is not here.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. We are advising Teresa for her own good. Of course, if she fails to appreciate it....

TERESA. No, no, I do fully.

ASSUMPTION. I also take exception to the bathing-suit.

TERESA. Don't you think it is becoming?

ASSUMPTION. I know it is what they are wearing at San

Sebastián and other fashionable beaches; but here no one would be so bold as to show herself in it.

TERESA. What do you wear here?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Haven't you noticed? A tunic gathered loosely around the neck, which reaches all the way down to the ground.

ASSUMPTION. Preferably trailing.

TERESA. Yes, but if the wind comes up....

DOÑA ESPERANZA. My dear, you wear bloomers, long bloomers, which envelop the figure the same as a skirt.

TERESA. Then how am I ever going to swim?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. We do not approve of swimming. Bathing is bathing; exercise is not for women. I heard yesterday that you swam out as far as the float, and sat down there to rest while you talked with the life-preserver, who was a man.

TERESA. An old man, I noticed.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. But all the same he was a man.

ASSUMPTION. Yes! A man!

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Remember what you had on. You think that nobody looks, but only half an hour ago we heard that Don Rosendo was up on the roof of his house with a telescope.

ASSUMPTION. Nothing escapes him. He has happened on a number of things in the village.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. As Enrique can testify.

ENRIQUE. I?

ASSUMPTION. Yes, one day when the maid was hanging clothes on the roof of this house, and you were not far away.

ENRIQUE. I? I? Does Don Rosendo say that I— Tell him from me to put armor on his telescope. To the devil with Don Rosendo and his telescope!

TERESA. No doubt he finds it amusing.

ENRIQUE. Mamma is awake. She is coming into the garden.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Teresita, promise us not to say one word to your aunt.

TERESA. No, no! I am much obliged to you.

ENRIQUE. I should think you were. [*Aside*] Who ever heard of such an outrage? I hope you don't believe that story about the roof?

The MARQUIS *and* MARCHIONESS *enter.*

MARCHIONESS. Have you been waiting long? Why didn't you let me know?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. It was not necessary. We had plenty of time. We knew that you were resting. How do you like our town, my dear Marquis?

MARQUIS. I am charmed with my summer. How quiet it is! I am astonished that we do not see more visitors.

MARCHIONESS. I hope we never shall. They would dissipate the charm. We live here like one big family. We are left to ourselves, as it were.

ENRIQUE. [*Aside to* TERESA] Which explains why it is so tiresome.

TERESA. [*Idem*] You will be set down as an anarchist if they hear you.

ENRIQUE. [*Idem*] You can't set me down.

MARCHIONESS. [*Aside to* ESPERANZA *and* ASSUMPTION] Did you speak to Teresita?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Yes, although I am sorry to say that she did not take it in good part. I could see it in her manner.

MARCHIONESS. She is her father over again; I am more certain of it every day.

ASSUMPTION. There has been a great change in Enrique since she arrived.

MARCHIONESS. In my son? What do you mean?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Yes, he seems more active, more alert. Keep your eye on him. It is well for a mother to know.

MARQUIS. [*To* TERESA] Here is a letter from the children —no, this is for me. Here is yours.

TERESA. Quick, quick! I am so happy! Didn't I tell you? Look, Enrique!

ENRIQUE. Is it the letter you were expecting?

TERESA. Yes.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. [*To the* MARCHIONESS] We came to apportion the hours so as to avoid any discussion. The other ladies will be satisfied with what you decide.

MARCHIONESS. Let us retire into the dining-room and dispose of everything. Enrique, bring us pen, ink, and paper.

ENRIQUE. At once.

Goes out, returning a moment later with the materials desired by the MARCHIONESS.

MARCHIONESS. We can write down our impressions as we go along.

ASSUMPTION. I suppose we must invite the wife of that impossible creature who has returned from America. He has made a handsome subscription.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. As a matter of fact, I have not heard anything against her for some time. I was never able to believe one-half of what I did hear, I can say with a clear conscience.

MARCHIONESS. Although half was sufficient. However, if she has found time to repent....

DOÑA ESPERANZA, ASSUMPTION, *and the* MARCHIONESS *withdraw, still conversing.* ENRIQUE *follows them.*

MARQUIS. How do you like the letter? I see nothing objectionable in it. The tone is respectful and obedient. The children have been thoroughly well trained.

TERESA. Yes....

MARQUIS. It is exactly what I told them to say.

TERESA. Oh! You did? It was you, then? You were the one who told them? But my letter....

MARQUIS. Your letter? Oh! Perhaps I ought to tell you, Teresa. When you read me that letter, I thought it best not to say anything. I could see that you were nervous and excited. I felt at once that it was improper; the letter was—how shall I put it?—sentimental, overdone. It would have shocked the children. It was like the letter of another child. In other words, although I said nothing, I decided it was better not to send it. You can sit down now and write more calmly, when your nerves are under better control. Of course, I want you to be affectionate, but try to make them respect you. Avoid overeffusiveness and be natural. I do not ask you to love them as if they were your own children; that would be preposterous. But I should like to have them respect you; endeavor to make yourself respected. You will find that I am perfectly fair; I am only reasonable. I expect no impossibilities.

TERESA. No, I see that you don't. You expect no impossibilities. But that letter, whatever it may have been, was written from the bottom of my heart, and I should have preferred to have them read it. But now.... I don't think you have done right—and I might as well tell you plainly—either by me or by the children. It was not the right thing to do.

MARQUIS. Come, come! Let us not have another attack of nerves.

TERESA. Nerves, nerves! I haven't any time to have nerves! I scarcely recognize myself any more. Life is too strong for us; sooner or later we are all cowed and thoroughly tamed. Nerves! When I was a child, when I always had

my own way, when my parents were alive to spoil me and the whole world revolved about what I wanted to do next, then I did have nerves! But now I haven't any. I keep still; I submit to everything.

MARQUIS. What are you talking about?

TERESA. Nothing, nothing! I say nothing. I always suspected it, but now I know that it is true. To be happy, to get on in the world, we must pretend, we must keep still. Don't trouble yourself; I shall never speak my mind to you again. You will see how silent I can become, and you will have cause to regret my silence.

MARQUIS. We will take that up when you have regained control of yourself. For the present it will be sufficient if you give no more exhibitions before your aunt.

TERESA. No; never. I told you that I had learned to keep still.

MARQUIS. It would not hurt you, either, to begin by being sensible.

TERESA. Ah!

The MARQUIS *retires, leaving* TERESA *in tears, seated.*

DON HELIODORO *enters in a high state of satisfaction.*

DON HELIODORO. I have found the talisman! I have found the talisman! Eh? What is the matter? Have you been crying?

TERESA. No, no; it was nothing.... Did you say a talisman? But uncle, what have you been doing? Where have you been?

DON HELIODORO. Never mind me; no wonder. I did not care to be seen on the street with Jesus, so we went in and sat down somewhere—it might have been a pastry shop; I can't say. But I feel better now. Aha! I am going to give them a surprise—and it is time. I am going to give them a shock. Aha, ladies and gentlemen, you may be

dignified and respectable, but I have the best of you now! I have found a talisman!

TERESA. But, uncle, don't be silly. What talisman?

DON HELIODORO. Look! [*Exhibiting a wallet filled with bank-notes*] Money! Money! And there is no end to it. I gave Jesus as much. They are going to sail together, they are going to be happy, and the ladies will have a spasm. Some one is going to burst before she hears the last of it—I won't tell you who.

TERESA. Yes, but explain; tell me all about it. Something is the matter with you, uncle.

DON HELIODORO. With me? Never! I feel positively fit. Call Nativity; tell her to come at once. Jesus is waiting for us, and I will lead her to him myself.

TERESA. But, uncle, it will never do; it is out of the question.

DON HELIODORO. It is, is it? The details are all arranged. All that remains is to convince Nativity.

TERESA. Impossible! She will never consent. If you are planning an elopement, such as people read about in novels, I tell you it is wrong, it is outrageous. I will be the first person to prevent it.

DON HELIODORO. You? Aha! If my nephew Enrique were not a mere infant in arms, I would pack you off, too, while I was about it.

TERESA. Uncle! What?

DON HELIODORO. Don't imagine that I haven't noticed the effect that you have on Enrique. He is unfolding his petals like a rose.

TERESA. For shame!

DON HELIODORO. It reminds me of Cherubino's love for the countess, who was his godmother. I came upon some

of his verses. They were bad, of course—which was natural —but they breathe passion. Oh!

"In the midnight of life when dark shadows had bound me,
Like a ray of the sun you burst on my view"....

Then he describes some horrible apparitions, which I take to be Doña Esperanza, Doña Assumption, and Don Francisquito, and then you appear, like a celestial shape, all fragrance and light....

TERESA. Uncle, you are making this up.

DON HELIODORO. Yes, making it up, making it up, am I? Do you mean to say that you have not been conscious of it from the beginning? Women are always the first to notice these things themselves.

TERESA. I don't intend to argue with you. But tell me what is more important. Did you really see Jesus? Did you overtake him?

DON HELIODORO. Everything in due season. When I left the house I stopped in at the Club to see if there were any letters for me, and—wonder of wonders!—there was a letter from an old friend of mine, a happy soul like myself, whom I had lent money one night when he was in need of it—I say lent, because it describes the transaction as well as anything else. However, there are times when we reap the whirlwind. To-day he writes me saying: "I hear that you are in need of money, while I have more than I know what to do with. It occurred to me that you had always been generous." And he encloses a draft. Think of that! I ran to Zurita's—naturally the bad one's; he always has plenty of money—and he cashed the draft! And with the talisman in my pocket, I set sail in search of Jesus. I found Jesus, I conferred with him, and we agreed upon a plan. Ah! By the way, I also saw Martin, and he assured me that he was only

marrying out of gratitude, to please the ladies, unhappy man!—and because he thought it might do him good. So when she says that she doesn't love him, he is even with her already. He will raise no objections; he has the fear of Jesus in his heart. Now you know the whole story. Run and tell Nativity—although it is probable that she knows. Jesus will have found a way. When I left him he was writing a letter, and such a letter! It was as bad as Enrique's verses, but it burned like fire. Here comes Nativity. What did I tell you?.... She knows!

NATIVITY *enters.*

NATIVITY. Señorita, help me, save me! I know you are good!

TERESA. But you must not take it so hard. What is the matter?

NATIVITY. You could never guess; I have a letter from Jesus. He says that unless I run away with him to-day—this very minute—I will be responsible for the loss of his soul. He says, too—to show you how crazy he is—that he has plenty of money. How could he honorably have plenty of money? It is impossible! I don't want to tell the Señora Marchioness, because she would make an example of him, but I know it is impossible. Save me, señorita!

TERESA. Don't cry; don't be afraid!

DON HELIODORO. You are misjudging Jesus. I was present when he wrote that letter; he did it by my advice. And I gave him the money. It will keep him until he can get work, and you can establish yourselves.

NATIVITY. You gave it to him?

DON HELIODORO. Yes, I. That is the way I do; I am crazy myself, and I wish to see you both happy in your love. I know you love Jesus, and he loves you, which is right and proper, and as it should be. Martin has confessed that he

feels just as you do about it. The disappointment will not kill him.

NATIVITY. But, Don Heliodoro——

DON HELIODORO. Mark my words. Let us be frank now about your feelings, about what you would really like to do. Suppose you were certain that if you confessed you loved Jesus, that if you declared you would never marry any one else, that nothing would happen; suppose that the ladies should not be angry, nor take it as ingratitude, nor withdraw their support; suppose that they should pardon Jesus in their hearts, and you both should live happily ever afterward—what would you say?

NATIVITY. Yes, but that would be different....

DON HELIODORO. Because you do love Jesus?

NATIVITY. I shouldn't be so unhappy if I didn't love him.

DON HELIODORO. You would rather marry him than the other fellow?

NATIVITY. *Sí, señor;* I am not ashamed to say it to you.

TERESA. In that case....

DON HELIODORO. In that case, speak out freely.

TERESA. But do you honestly believe that if Nativity should confess....

DON HELIODORO. Confess nothing. Words are worse than useless. I know these people. First, they would be angry; afterward, when they became convinced that it was of no effect, they would pretend to be reconciled; they would be hypocritically calm, smooth, and affectionate, and, with every art at their command, scheme to place Jesus in a false position, in which he would appear like a scoundrel. They would take advantage of every slip, of every moment of irresolution, in order to make you believe it—oh! I know them—and in the end they would succeed. That is precisely what I do not intend to have. No, the more sea and

land between you the better. Then you will remain in blissful ignorance of their horror, their consternation, and their cries. What is neither seen nor heard is as if it did not exist. Come, Nativity, do not hesitate; it is the best, the only way. Otherwise you need not count upon my protection, which is at least as generous as that of any one else, and a great deal more disinterested.

NATIVITY. Señorita, do you hear what he says? I can never run away like this.

DON HELIODORO. Like this, like this? You can get married in the first port of call, or, if necessary, on the ship. As an emergency, seasickness yields nothing to death. Or you needn't get married. You would be less hampered in that case should there be cause of regret.

TERESA. Don't be sacrilegious, uncle.

DON HELIODORO. Nonsense! You know my views. Well, how is it? Do you hesitate?

TERESA. This cannot go on forever. Speak out; don't be afraid.

DON HELIODORO. Oh, yes! I understand; I told you how it would be. Now, listen to me, Nativity—and you, too. I don't purpose to give you any advice. She is the one who is going to do it—another woman like yourself. You love the señorita, do you not?

NATIVITY. Oh, *sí, señor!* I do.

DON HELIODORO. And you believe that she is virtuous and good, and incapable of giving bad advice?

NATIVITY. Oh, no, señor!

DON HELIODORO. Suppose she should say to you: "I want you to go with the man whom you love; do it for me." Well, answer her.

NATIVITY. Since the señorita says so....

TERESA. I?

DON HELIODORO. Answer her.

NATIVITY. If the señorita should say so....

DON HELIODORO. It is your turn now, don't you see? Weigh it carefully; balance it in your conscience. The fate of this girl depends upon you. They married you precisely as they purpose to do her; her life will be what yours is. She will be bound forever to a man who does not love her, with whom she can have no true companionship; they can never be one. They will remain two persons, who measure and weigh their words eternally so as to conceal their true thoughts, not to reveal them. I am serious now, intensely serious—sober, if you like. What does your heart say? What does your conscience?

TERESA. You ask me that question in a terrible crisis of my life, when I see clearly for the first time what my future must be—devoid of love, as you say, of true companionship, lived with a man into whose thoughts I can never enter; we can never be one. My heart would not hesitate, but the responsibility of determining the life of another is too grave. If I should be wrong, if it should be a mistake—I cannot advise you; I cannot pronounce the word. Your own heart must decide.

DON HELIODORO. But what would yours do? The truth, now, by all that is holy, yes, by the living truth itself, which is the holiest thing in our lives. The one duty of our lives is to follow the truth all our lives, lead where it will lead.

TERESA. You are right. It may mean poverty and it may mean suffering, but you are called by your love. You may be happy for only one day, but you will be happier then than those of us who have never been happy, who cannot even hope to be happy in our lives.

DON HELIODORO. Do you hear?

NATIVITY. Señorita!

TERESA. Do you love him dearly?

NATIVITY. Yes, señorita; I love him, and my heart goes out to him, because I know that he can never be good unless it is with me. If he is alone in the world, he will come to some bad end, and my heart will always bear the remorse.

TERESA. It is the truth. Then go with him, and do not hesitate; be happy in your lives. Together you were borne in from the sea, and the sea shall carry you away.

NATIVITY. Señorita....do you mean?.... Ah! I don't believe it can be wrong! I cry for joy!

DON HELIODORO. Come, come with me! You will need a few things. We can go out through the carriage-house and no one will ever know.

NATIVITY. Señorita, nobody every spoke like this to me before.

DON HELIODORO. I said a few things myself. If it hadn't been for me....

NATIVITY. I know you are a good man.

DON HELIODORO. In my own way, perhaps, although it may not be the best. I know that you love each other; I cannot tell whether you will be happy, but when we undertake to determine the future, we are encroaching upon God's preserve. Come with me.

NATIVITY. Señorita, tell them that I am not ungrateful, that I am not a bad woman.

TERESA. No, my poor girl. Embrace me before you go —for part of my soul goes with you.

DON HELIODORO takes NATIVITY by the hand and leads her away, leaving TERESA in tears, alone. She gazes after them as they disappear. A brief pause. Then ENRIQUE enters.

ENRIQUE. Teresa, Teresa! Is Uncle Heliodoro back yet?

TERESA. Yes, but don't talk to me. I don't know what to do. Where are your mother and the other ladies?

ENRIQUE. Holding a grand council. They have La Repelona.

TERESA. Ah! I am glad to hear it. She will keep them talking.

ENRIQUE. No, she has repented. She says that she has left her man, that she is not willing to live in sin any longer, and begs them to help her, and to get her some work. It is the old story, but it produces results.

TERESA. Poor woman!

ENRIQUE. Tell me, what did Uncle Heliodoro have to say? Has he been with Jesus?

TERESA. Yes, he has. You will hear later.... I don't know what is the matter with me; I am so depressed. Have I done right, have I done wrong?

ENRIQUE. Have you done wrong? What do you mean?

TERESA. [*Leading him to the rear*] Look, look!

ENRIQUE. Nativity, Uncle Heliodoro.... Where are they going?

TERESA. Hush!.... The ladies! Pretend not to see. I don't know what I am saying. It may not be too late yet. I don't know, I don't know....

ENRIQUE. But you don't mean?.... Not really?....

TERESA. Yes.

ENRIQUE. I am delighted! I am sure they will be happy!

TERESA. Do you really believe that it is possible to be happy in this world?

The MARCHIONESS, DOÑA ESPERANZA, ASSUMPTION, *and* LA REPELONA *enter.*

MARCHIONESS. We heard what you said. All that we need is to be satisfied as to its credibility.

LA REPELONA. Ah, Señora Marchioness, whose image I

preserve in my soul, and Doña Esperanza's, which is in my heart, and her dear sister's, if it can ever be said again that I have gone back to live with that man, and it is true what they say, then you will know that I deserve to live with him and nothing else, and be reduced to what I am now by that villain and worthless vagabond, ay, and drunken sot that he is. I only wish you could see the wounds on my body he has made, and you would know that I live in martyrdom, so that if I was a saint I would already have had my day in the calendar, only I am not enough of a saint; but there are plenty who are less martyrs. Yet I repent....

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Persevere, persevere, my woman, in good works.

REPELONA. I always persevere so long as you stand by, señora, and all the ladies. I don't know what would become of me if it wasn't for you. I will be as steady in my work again as I was before I met him—in an evil hour for me! Surely I lay under the curse.

MARCHIONESS. Be more careful hereafter, and avoid all such occasions. God be with you, and may He assist you in your labors. If that man follows you, or if he threatens you, let us know without delay, and don't attempt to tell us that he overcame you through fear.

REPELONA. Oh, no, señora! Let him dash me into pieces and drag me in the dust, but I shall never look at him—I shall never look at his face again! God be with you, ladies, and may He repay you and grant that you live as many years as there are good deeds you have done in the world, and may he lend me the strength to follow and kiss the ground where you set your feet.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. For the present, that will be sufficient.

REPELONA. You are all so good—so kind and good!

[*She goes out.*

MARCHIONESS. What do you think of this conversion?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Sometimes it must be sincere. What do you think, Marchioness?

MARCHIONESS. I see no reason to doubt it. I believe that the Junta will approve the expenditure, in view of the urgency of the relief.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Why not? Shall we go, Marchioness —if you are ready?

MARCHIONESS. At once. Enrique, ask Nativity to bring the bundle of clothes which I left in the store-closet, and to follow immediately.

ENRIQUE. Yes, mamma.

TERESA. [*Aside*] Don't you go.

ENRIQUE. Eh?

MARCHIONESS. We are waiting....

ENRIQUE. Yes, of course.—What was that?

TERESA. No, no; go....but delay as much as possible. [*Discovering* MARTIN, *who enters*] Never mind; it is too late. It makes no difference.

MARTIN. Have I permission? May I come in?

MARCHIONESS. Why, Martin! What brings you here at this hour? Is there something you wish to say to Nativity, or do we allow you too little opportunity to talk? She will be with us directly and then you may see her, but only for a moment.

MARTIN. Nativity? No, I did not come to see her, and I never expect to see her again. I don't care if I never see her!

MARCHIONESS. How?

MARTIN. No, señora. Nativity and Jesus have taken ship, and at this moment they are sailing away. They are at sea together, transported.

THE MARCHIONESS, DOÑA ESPERANZA, AND ASSUMPTION.

Eh? What is that? Impossible!.... Nativity! Nativity! [*They begin calling* NATIVITY *upon all sides.*

MARCHIONESS. Nativity! Nativity! [*To* ENRIQUE] Run and find her. It is impossible, because she was just here. [*To* TERESA] We saw her with you.

TERESA. Yes, but she went out.

MARCHIONESS. She went out? [*To* MARTIN] But how do you know?

MARTIN. I know because I know; I listened to Jesus....

DOÑA ESPERANZA. I have no faith in that man.

MARCHIONESS. He is too horrible for words!

ASSUMPTION. He overpowered her; he carried her away by force.

MARTIN. No, señora, she went willingly. They loved each other, and so they ran away for fear that you would not permit them to marry. I am glad it happened now, because if it had been afterward....

MARCHIONESS. But how could they run away? Where did they get the money?

MARTIN. They had plenty. You can ask Don Heliodoro.

MARCHIONESS. My brother?

DOÑA ESPERANZA. It might be, Marchioness.

ASSUMPTION. Your brother is capable of anything.

Meanwhile DON HELIODORO *enters and overhears the closing words of the conversation.*

DON HELIODORO. Yes, it was I! I am the man! I am proud of it, and I don't regret it.

MARCHIONESS. You may well be proud.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. He is not the only one who is to blame. What ingratitude! What ingratitude!

ASSUMPTION. I should never have believed it of the girl.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. But the impudence of it! To run away, to elope!

ASSUMPTION. Her punishment will come later—we can imagine what it will be.

The voices of CABRERA *and* LA REPELONA *are heard outside, wrangling with a pack of boys, who run hooting after them down the street.*

MARCHIONESS. What are those shouts?

ASSUMPTION. [*At the rear*] I can scarcely believe my eyes. No, no, don't you look, Marchioness! This is not for you.

MARTIN. [*Hurrying to the rear*] It is Cabrera and the boys. They are hooting him as usual.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. [*Rushing to the rear also*] Cabrera, drunk as can be, and that woman on his arm—embracing repentance with a vengeance!

MARCHIONESS. Enough! Enough! I don't care to hear! I wash my hands of the whole business. I am done with your Junta, I refuse absolutely to interfere.

DOÑA ESPERANZA. Yes, this surpasses anything I ever heard of.

ASSUMPTION. It would be impossible to go further. Ah!

The shouts and cries die away.

MARCHIONESS. What can you expect of such people? But the others, the others.... She was such a nice girl! What a pity!

DOÑA ESPERANZA. This is what we get in return for our charity.

MARCHIONESS. They eat our bread....

ASSUMPTION. They owe their very lives to our mercy.

MARCHIONESS. [*To* DON HELIODORO] And it is all your fault!

DOÑA ESPERANZA. This is the result of preaching your ideas. Now you see the consequence.

MARCHIONESS. [*To* TERESA] And you knew it! It was a

plot. But wait till your husband hears! We shall take good care that he does hear.

ENRIQUE. Why, mamma——

DON HELIODORO. Hold your tongue!

TERESA. Yes. What is the use? We did it—we rebels, we ingrates. For once we had our way.

DON HELIODORO. Yes, we had our way, and it was a good one. We shall never regret it. We can rest satisfied with a clear conscience.—What is all this nonsense? Suppose they did eat your bread, suppose they were ungrateful and owed their lives to you? We have given them something which is better than life—we have given them liberty and love.

Curtain

LA MALQUERIDA

DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

First Presented by the Compañía Guerrero-Mendoza at the Teatro de la Princesa, Madrid, on the Evening of the Twelfth of December, 1913

CHARACTERS

RAIMUNDA
ACACIA
JULIANA
DOÑA ISABEL
MILAGROS
FIDELA
ENGRACIA
BERNABEA
GASPARA
ESTEBAN
NORBERT
FAUSTINO
TÍO EUSEBIO
BERNABÉ
RUBIO

The action of the play takes place in Castile

TO MARIA GUERRERO

LA MALQUERIDA

THE FIRST ACT

A room in a rich farmer's house, situated on the outskirts of a pueblo, or small town.

As the curtain rises, RAIMUNDA, ACACIA, DOÑA ISABEL, MILAGROS, FIDELA, ENGRACIA, GASPARA, *and* BERNABEA *are bidding farewell to four or five women and young girls who are taking leave. While the others stand,* DOÑA ISABEL *remains seated.*

GASPARA. God be with you! Good-by, Raimunda.

BERNABEA. God be with you, Doña Isabel—and you, too, Acacia, and your mother. May everything turn out for the best.

RAIMUNDA. Thanks. May we all live to see it. Go down with them, Acacia.

ALL. Good-by! Good-by!

The women and girls retire, keeping up an animated chatter. ACACIA *accompanies them.*

DOÑA ISABEL. Bernabea is a nice girl.

ENGRACIA. It is only a year since she got over that trouble. No one would ever believe it to look at her now.

DOÑA ISABEL. I hear that she is going to be married.

FIDELA. Yes, come next fiesta—God willing and San Roque.

DOÑA ISABEL. I am always the last person in the village to pick up gossip. When you have nothing but trouble at home, naturally you lose interest in what is taking place outside.

ENGRACIA. How is your husband?

DOÑA ISABEL. He varies—up and down. The rest of us are thoroughly worn out. We are not able to leave the house, not even to attend mass upon Sundays. I am used to it myself, but it is hard on my daughter.

ENGRACIA. I think you make a mistake to keep her at home so much. This is a great year for weddings.

DOÑA ISABEL. But not for her. I am afraid that we shall never be able to find a man who measures up to her expectations.

FIDELA. All the same, it never struck me that she was born to be a nun. Some day she will happen on the right one.

DOÑA ISABEL. How are you pleased with this match, Raimunda? I must say you don't seem altogether cheerful about it.

RAIMUNDA. A wedding is always something of an experiment.

ENGRACIA. If you aren't satisfied, I am sure I don't know who could ever be. Your daughter has had the pick of the entire village.

FIDELA. She's not likely to want for anything, either. We all know how well they will both be provided for, which is not a thing you can afford to overlook.

RAIMUNDA. Milagros, run down-stairs and enjoy yourself with Acacia and the boys. I hate to see you sitting there all alone in a corner.

DOÑA ISABEL. Yes, do go down.—The child is as innocent as the day that God made her.

MILAGROS. Excuse me. [*Goes out.*

RAIMUNDA. We might all take another glass and some *bizcochos*.

DOÑA ISABEL. Thanks, I have had enough.

RAIMUNDA. No, no, come, everybody. This is nothing.

DOÑA ISABEL. Acacia doesn't seem as happy as you might expect, either, considering that her engagement was only announced to-day.

RAIMUNDA. She is as innocent, too, as God made her. I never saw any one like her; she is so silent. She distracts me. For weeks together she has not one word to say. Then there are times when she begins to talk, and her tongue runs until it fairly takes your breath away. It is a terrible thing to hear.

ENGRACIA. Naturally, you have spoiled her. After you lost the three boys she was all that you had, and you were too careful. Her father would have plucked the birds out of the air if she had asked for them, and you were no better. When he died—God rest his soul—then the child was jealous of you. She didn't like it when you married again, and she has never gotten over that grudge either.

RAIMUNDA. But what was I to do? I didn't want tc marry again. I should never have thought of it if my brothers hadn't turned out the way that they did. If we had not had a man in the house to look after us, my daughter and I would have been in the street before this, and you know it.

DOÑA ISABEL. Yes, this world is no place for single women. You were left a widow very young.

RAIMUNDA. But I can't see why my daughter should be jealous. I am her mother, yet it would be hard to say which of us loves or spoils her the most. Esteban has never treated her like a stepdaughter.

DOÑA ISABEL. No wonder; you had no children of your own.

RAIMUNDA. He never comes nor goes without bringing her a present. He never thinks of such a thing with me—although, of course, I have no feeling. She is my daughter;

it only makes me love him more to see how fond he is of her. You won't believe it when I tell you, but she would never let him kiss her even when she was a child, much less now. I have seldom had to lay my hand on her, but whenever I have, it was on that account.

FIDELA. Nobody can make me believe, just the same, that your daughter isn't in love with her cousin.

RAIMUNDA. Norbert? She turned him off herself between night and morning, and that was the end of it. That is another thing I can't understand. We never could find out what did happen between them.

FIDELA. Nor anybody else. Nobody has ever been able to explain it. There must have been some reason, but what it was is a mystery.

ENGRACIA. Well, she never seemed to regret it, which is more than I can say for him. She never looked at him again, but he hasn't changed. When he heard that Faustino was coming over with his father to-day to settle the matter and arrange things, he turned on his heel, took his gun, and went straight up to Los Berrocales. People who saw him said that you would have thought that it had broken his heart.

RAIMUNDA. Neither Esteban nor I influenced her in the least. She broke with Norbert herself, just as they were ready to publish the banns. Everybody knows it. Then she consented to see Faustino. He always had a fancy for her. His father is a great friend of Esteban's—they belong to the same party and always work together. They have known each other for a long time. Whenever we went to Encinar for the Feast of the Virgin—or for any other fiesta—or if they were the ones who came here, it was easy to see that the boy was nervous. When she was around he didn't know what to do. He knew that there was something between her and her cousin, but he never said one word until

the break came, whatever the reason was, which we don't know—no, not one; but as soon as they heard that she was done with her cousin, Faustino's father spoke to Esteban, and Esteban spoke to me, and I spoke to my daughter, and she seemed to be pleased; so now they are going to be married. That is all there is to it. If she is not satisfied, then God have mercy on her soul, because we are only doing it to please her. She has had her own way in everything.

DOÑA ISABEL. Then she ought to be happy. Why not? The boy is a fine fellow. Everybody says so.

ENGRACIA. Yes, we all feel as if he belonged in the village. He lives so near by, and his family is so well known that nobody ever thinks of them as strangers.

FIDELA. Tío Eusebio owns more land here than at Encinar.

ENGRACIA. Certainly, if you stop to count. He inherited everything from his Uncle Manolito, and when the town lands were sold, two years ago, they went to him.

DOÑA ISABEL. The family is the richest in the neighborhood.

FIDELA. Undoubtedly. There may be four brothers, but each of them will come into a fortune.

ENGRACIA. Your daughter is not going barefoot, either.

RAIMUNDA. No, she is an only child and will inherit everything. Esteban has taken good care of the farm which she had from her father; he could not have done more if she had been his own child.

The Angelus sounds.

DOÑA ISABEL. The Angelus! [*The women mumble the words of the prayer*] It is time for us to be going, Raimunda. Telesforo expects his supper early—if the nibble of nothing which he takes can be called supper.

ENGRACIA. It is time for us all to go.

FIDELA. We were all thinking the same thing.

RAIMUNDA. But won't you stay to supper? I don't urge Doña Isabel—I know she ought not to leave her husband. He is impatient to see her back.

ENGRACIA. Yes. We all have husbands to look after. Thanks just the same.

DOÑA ISABEL. I suppose the young man stays to supper?

RAIMUNDA. No, he is going home with his father to Encinar. They cannot spend the night. There is no moon, so they should have been on the road long ago. It is getting late and the days are growing shorter. Before you know it, it is black night.

ENGRACIA. I hear them coming up now to say good-by.

RAIMUNDA. I thought so.

ACACIA, MILAGROS, ESTEBAN, TÍO EUSEBIO, *and* FAUSTINO *enter.*

ESTEBAN. Raimunda, here are Tío Eusebio and Faustino to say good-by.

EUSEBIO. We must be off before dark. The roads are in terrible shape after the heavy rains.

ESTEBAN. There are some bad stretches.

DOÑA ISABEL. Well, what has the boy to say for himself? I suppose he doesn't remember me. It is five years since I have seen him.

EUSEBIO. Don't you remember Doña Isabel?

FAUSTINO. I do, *sí, señor.* I was afraid she didn't remember me.

DOÑA ISABEL. No fear of that! My husband was *alcalde* at the time, when you gave us that awful fright, running after the bull. If you had been killed, I don't know what would have happened. I didn't enjoy it. God help San Roque!—it would have put an end to his fiesta. We certainly thought you were dead.

ENGRACIA. Julian, Eudosia's husband, was caught that year too.

FAUSTINO. I remember; *sí, señora.*

EUSEBIO. He remembers perfectly, because I gave him a sound thrashing when he got home—which he deserved.

FAUSTINO. I was a boy at the time.

DOÑA ISABEL. Yes—the boy of it! However, you have picked out the finest girl in the village, and she will have no reason to regret her choice either. But we must be going. You have business of your own to attend to.

ESTEBAN. No, they have attended to everything already.

DOÑA ISABEL. Good night, then. Come, Milagros.

ACACIA. I want her to stay to supper, but she is afraid to ask you. Do let her stay, Doña Isabel!

RAIMUNDA. Yes, do. Bernabé and Juliana will see her home afterward, and Esteban can go along, too, if necessary.

DOÑA ISABEL. No, we will send for her. You can stay, to please Acacia.

RAIMUNDA. They have so many things to talk over.

DOÑA ISABEL. God be with you. Adios, Tío Eusebio and Esteban.

EUSEBIO. Adios, Doña Isabel. My best sympathy to your husband.

DOÑA ISABEL. Which he appreciates, coming from you.

ENGRACIA. Good-by! A safe return!

FIDELA. God be with you!

The women go out.

EUSEBIO. Doña Isabel looks remarkably young. She must be my age at least. Well, "To have and to hold is to prepare to grow old," as the proverb has it. Doña Isabel was one of the best of them in her day, and in her day there were plenty.

ESTEBAN. Sit down, Tío Eusebio. What is your hurry?

EUSEBIO. No, don't tempt me; it's time to go. Night is coming on. Don't bother about us. We have the hands along and shan't need you.

ESTEBAN. No, the walk will do me good. I'll see you to the *arroyo* at least.

RAIMUNDA, ACACIA, *and* MILAGROS *re-enter.*

EUSEBIO. If you young folks have anything to say, now is the time for you to say it.

ACACIA. No, we have settled everything.

EUSEBIO. So you think.

RAIMUNDA. Come, come! Don't you try to embarrass my daughter, Tío Eusebio.

ACACIA. Thanks for everything.

EUSEBIO. What? Is that a way to thank me?

ACACIA. It was a lovely present.

EUSEBIO. The showiest thing we could find.

RAIMUNDA. Entirely too much so for a farmer's daughter.

EUSEBIO. Too much? Not a bit of it! If I'd had my way, it would have had more jewels in it than the Holy Monstrance at Toledo. Give your mother-in-law a good hug.

RAIMUNDA. Yes, come, boy. I must learn to love you or I shall never forgive you for taking her away. My heart goes with her.

ESTEBAN. Now don't begin to cry! Come, Acacia! You don't want to pass yourself off for a Magdalen.

MILAGROS. Raimunda! Acacia! [*Bursts into tears also.*

ESTEBAN. That's right—all together! Come, come!

EUSEBIO. Don't be foolish! Tears are for the dead. You are only going to be married. Try to be happy and enjoy yourselves; everybody is willing. Adios and good night!

RAIMUNDA. Adios, Tío Eusebio. Tell Julia that I don't

know whether I shall ever be able to forgive her for not coming over to-day.

EUSEBIO. You know how bad her sight is. We'd have had to hitch up the cart, and it was up at Los Berrocales. We are beginning to slaughter.

RAIMUNDA. Tell her how sorry I am. May she be better soon.

EUSEBIO. Thanks to you.

RAIMUNDA. Now you had better be going. It is getting dark. [*To* ESTEBAN] Don't be long.

EUSEBIO. I tell him not to come.

ESTEBAN. Nonsense! It isn't any trouble. I'll go as far as the *arroyo*. Don't wait supper for me.

RAIMUNDA. No, we will wait. We're not anxious to eat alone to-night. Milagros won't mind if we are late.

MILAGROS. It makes no difference to me.

EUSEBIO. God be with you all! Good-by!

RAIMUNDA. No, we are coming down to see you out.

FAUSTINO. I....I have something to say to Acacia first....

EUSEBIO. It will have to wait until to-morrow. You have had the whole day to yourselves.

FAUSTINO. Yes, but with so many people around, I had no chance....

EUSEBIO. Before we were through I knew we were going to get some of this nonsense.

FAUSTINO. It isn't nonsense. Only I promised mother before we started to give Acacia this scapulary. The nuns in the convent made it on purpose for her.

ACACIA. How lovely!

MILAGROS. Oh! The Blessed Virgin of Carmen—with spangles all over!

RAIMUNDA. Very pretty. My daughter was always de-

voted to the Virgin. Thank your mother for us. We appreciate it.

FAUSTINO. It has been blessed.

EUSEBIO. Good! Now you have got that off your mind. I wonder what your mother would have thought if we'd taken it home again with us? I never saw such a boy! I wasn't so backward in my day. I am sure I don't know whom he does take after.

All go out. For a moment the stage remains deserted. Meanwhile it continues to grow darker. Presently RAIMUNDA, ACACIA, *and* MILAGROS *reappear.*

RAIMUNDA. They have made a long day of it. It is night before they start. How do you feel, my dear? Are you happy?

ACACIA. You can see for yourself.

RAIMUNDA. I can, can I? That is exactly what I want to do: see for myself. Nobody can ever tell how you feel.

ACACIA. I am tired out.

RAIMUNDA. It has certainly been a long day. I haven't had a minute's rest since five o'clock in the morning.

MILAGROS. Everybody has been here to congratulate you.

RAIMUNDA. The whole village, you might say, beginning with the priest, who was among the first. We paid him for a mass, and gave him ten loaves of bread besides for the poor. In our happiness it is only right to remember others who are not so fortunate. Praise God, we want for nothing! Where are the matches?

ACACIA. Here they are, mother.

RAIMUNDA. Light the lamp, dear. It makes me feel sad to sit in the dark. [*Calling*] Juliana! Juliana! I wonder where she is?

JULIANA. [*Down-stairs*] What do you want?

RAIMUNDA. Bring up the broom and dust-pan.

JULIANA. [*Down-stairs*] In a minute.

RAIMUNDA. I had better change my skirt while I think of it. Nobody will be in now; it's so late.

ACACIA. I might take off my dress.

RAIMUNDA. What for? There is nothing for you to do. You have been busy all day.

JULIANA *enters.*

JULIANA. Show me that dust——

RAIMUNDA. Stand the broom in the corner and take these things away. Mind you scour them until they are clean; then put them back in the cupboard. Be careful with those glasses! They are our best.

JULIANA. Could I eat a cake?

RAIMUNDA. Of course you can!—though I don't see how you manage to hold so much.

JULIANA. I haven't touched a thing this whole day, God help me! I am my mother's own daughter. Haven't I passed cake and wine to the entire village? Everybody has been here to-day. That shows you what people think of this house—yes, and what they think of Tío Eusebio and his family. Wait till you see the wedding! I know somebody who is going to give her a new gold piece, and somebody who is going to give her a silk embroidered quilt that has flowers all over it, so lifelike that the first thing she will want to do is pick them off of it. That will be a great day for her, praise God! Not one of us but will laugh and cry then, and I will be the first—after her mother; she will be first because it is her right, but you know me. I love you all in this house. Besides, you make me think of my dead daughter. She looked just like you do when she died, and we buried her.

RAIMUNDA. Never mind that, Juliana. Go along and

don't dig up any more of your troubles. We have enough of our own already.

JULIANA. God grant that I may never be a trouble to you! But everything goes topsyturvy with me to-day, around and around, and every which way. The more you enjoy yourself the sadder it makes you feel. God forbid that I should ever drag in this child's poor dead father, who rests in heaven now, God bless him! But I wish he could have seen her to-day! He was fond of her.

RAIMUNDA. That will do, Juliana! That will do.

JULIANA. Don't talk like that to me, Raimunda. It's like a blow in the face, like beating a faithful hound. That's what I have been to you and your daughter and your house—a faithful hound, that has eaten your bread, God willing, in season and out—yes, and kept her self-respect while she was about it, and you know it. [*Goes out.*

RAIMUNDA. Juliana!—She is right, though. She has always been like a faithful hound—faithful and loyal to us and our house. [*She begins to sweep.*

ACACIA. Mother——

RAIMUNDA. Did you speak?

ACACIA. Will you let me have the key to this chest of drawers? I want to show Milagros some of my things.

RAIMUNDA. Yes, here it is; take the bunch. Sit down and rest while I go and keep an eye on the supper.

[*She takes the broom and goes out.*

ACACIA *and* MILAGROS *seat themselves on the floor before the chest of drawers and open the lower drawer or compartment.*

ACACIA. These earrings were a present from—well, from Esteban, since my mother isn't here. She always wants me to call him father.

MILAGROS. Don't you know that he loves you?

ACACIA. Yes, but you can have only one father and mother. He brought me these handkerchiefs, too, from Toledo. The nuns embroidered the initials. See all these post-cards—aren't they pretty?

MILAGROS. What lovely ladies!

ACACIA. Yes, they're actresses from Madrid, or from Paris in France. Look at these boys— He brought me this box, too; it had candy in it.

MILAGROS. I don't see how you can say then....

ACACIA. I don't say anything. I know he loves me, but I'd rather have been left alone with my mother.

MILAGROS. You don't mean to tell me that your mother loves you any less on his account?

ACACIA. I don't know. She's wrapped up in him. How do I know, if she had to choose between me and that man....

MILAGROS. I think it's wicked to talk like that. Suppose your mother hadn't married again, what would she do now when you get married? She would have no one to live with.

ACACIA. You don't suppose that I would ever have gotten married, do you, if I had been living alone with my mother?

MILAGROS. Of course you would! What difference would it make?

ACACIA. Could I be as happy anywhere else as living here alone with my mother?

MILAGROS. Don't be foolish. Everybody knows what a nice stepfather you have. If he hadn't been good there would have been talk, and I would have heard it. So would you and your mother.

ACACIA. I don't say that he isn't good. But all the same I wouldn't have married if my mother hadn't married again.

MILAGROS. Do you know what I think?

ACACIA. What?

MILAGROS. People are right when they say that you don't love Faustino. The one that you love is Norbert.

ACACIA. That's a lie! How could I love him?—after the way that he treated me.

MILAGROS. Everybody says that you were the one who turned him off.

ACACIA. I did, did I? Yes, I suppose it was my fault! Anyway, we won't talk about it. What do they know? I love Faustino better than I ever did Norbert.

MILAGROS. I hope you do. Otherwise you oughtn't to marry him. Did you hear that Norbert left the village this morning? He didn't want to be around.

ACACIA. What does he care? Why to-day more than any other? It is nothing to him. Here is the last letter he wrote me—after everything was over. I never mean to see him again; I don't know what I am keeping it for. It would be more sensible to tear it up. [*She tears the letter into small pieces*] There! That ends it.

MILAGROS. What is the matter with you? You are all excited.

ACACIA. It's what he says. Now I am going to burn the pieces.

MILAGROS. Look out! The lamp will explode.

ACACIA. [*Opening the window*] To the road with you! I'll scatter the ashes.... The wind blows them away.... It is over now, and I am glad of it. Did you ever see such a dark night?

MILAGROS. [*Following her to the window*] It is black as pitch—no moon, no stars....

ACACIA. What was that?

MILAGROS. Somebody slammed a door.

ACACIA. It sounded to me like a shot.

MILAGROS. Nonsense! Who would be out shooting at

this hour? Unless there is a fire somewhere.... No, I don't see any glow in the sky.

ACACIA. I am frightened. Yes, I am——

MILAGROS. Don't be silly!

ACACIA. [*Running suddenly to the door*] Mother! Mother!

RAIMUNDA. [*Down-stairs*] What is it?

ACACIA. Did you hear anything?

RAIMUNDA. [*Down-stairs*] Yes. I sent Juliana to find out. It's all right.

ACACIA. Oh, mother!

RAIMUNDA. Don't be afraid! I am coming up.

ACACIA. It was a shot! I know it was a shot!

MILAGROS. Suppose it was? What of it?

ACACIA. God help us!

RAIMUNDA *enters.*

RAIMUNDA. Did it frighten you? Nothing is the matter.

ACACIA. Mother, you are frightened yourself.

RAIMUNDA. Because you are. Naturally, I was frightened at first—your father hasn't come back. But it is silly. Nothing could have happened. What was that? Do you hear? Some one is down-stairs! God help us!

ACACIA. Mother! Mother!

MILAGROS. What do they say? What are they talking about?

RAIMUNDA. Stay where you are. I am going down.

ACACIA. Mother, don't you go!

RAIMUNDA. I can't make out what they say.... I am too excited.... Oh, Esteban, my heart! May no harm have come to you! [*She rushes out.*

MILAGROS. There is a crowd down-stairs. They are coming in. I can't make out what they say....

ACACIA. Something has happened! Something awful! I knew it all the time.

MILAGROS. So did I, only I didn't want to frighten you.

ACACIA. What do you think?

MILAGROS. Don't ask me! Don't ask!

RAIMUNDA. [*Down-stairs*] Holy Virgin! God save us! Terrible, terrible! Oh, his poor mother when she hears that her poor boy is dead—murdered! I can't believe it! What a terrible thing for us all!

ACACIA. What does she say? Did you hear?—Mother! Mother! Mother!

RAIMUNDA. Acacia! Daughter! Don't you come down! Don't come down! I am coming up.

RAIMUNDA, FIDELA, ENGRACIA, *and a number of other women enter.*

ACACIA. What's the matter? What has happened? Some one is dead, isn't he? Some one is dead?

RAIMUNDA. My poor child! Faustino! Faustino!

ACACIA. What?

RAIMUNDA. Murdered! Shot dead as he left the village!

ACACIA. Mother! *Ay!* But who did it? Who did it?

RAIMUNDA. Nobody knows. It was too dark; they couldn't see. Every one thinks it was Norbert—so as to fill the cup of disgrace which we must drain in this house!

ENGRACIA. It couldn't have been any one else.

WOMEN. It was Norbert! It was Norbert!

FIDELA. Here come the constables.

ENGRACIA. Have they caught him?

RAIMUNDA. And here is your father. [ESTEBAN *enters*] Esteban, my soul! Who did it? Do you know?

ESTEBAN. How do I know? I saw what the rest did. Don't leave the house, do you hear? I don't want to have you running around the village.

RAIMUNDA. But how is his father? Think of his poor mother when they carry her boy home to her dead—mur-

dered! And he left her alive, happy, and well only this morning!

ENGRACIA. Hanging is too good for the wretch that did it!

FIDELA. They ought to have killed him on the spot! Such a thing never happened before in this village.

RAIMUNDA. Esteban, don't let them take the body away. I must see him—and so must my daughter. He was to have been her husband.

ESTEBAN. Keep cool! There is plenty of time. I don't want you to leave the house, do you hear? It's in the hands of the law now; the doctor and priest were too late. I must hurry back; we all have depositions to make.

[ESTEBAN *retires.*

RAIMUNDA. Your father is right. What can we do?—except commend his soul to God, who was his Maker. I can't get his poor mother out of my head! Don't take it so hard, Acacia. It frightens me to see you so still. It is worse than if you cried your heart out. Who would ever have believed this morning that such a thing could be? But it is! A curse has fallen upon us!

ENGRACIA. The shot went straight through his heart.

FIDELA. He fell off his horse, like a log.

RAIMUNDA. What a shame, what a disgrace to the village! I blush to think that the murderer was born in this place, that he was one of us, and walked about here with all that evil in his heart! He is one of our own family, to make it worse!

GASPARA. But we aren't sure of that.

RAIMUNDA. Who else could it be? Everybody says so.

ENGRACIA. Everybody says it was Norbert.

FIDELA. It couldn't have been any one but Norbert!

RAIMUNDA. Light the candles, Milagros, before the image

of the Virgin. Let us tell her a rosary, since we can do no more than pray for the dead.

GASPARA. God rest his soul!

ENGRACIA. He died without confession.

FIDELA. From Purgatory, good Lord, deliver us.

ALL. God rest his soul!

RAIMUNDA. [*To* MILAGROS] You begin the rosary; I cannot pray. I am thinking of his mother's broken heart!

The women begin to tell the rosary.

Curtain

THE SECOND ACT

Entrance Hall of a farmhouse. There is a large door at the rear, on either side of which is a window, having an iron grating. A door on the left, and another on the right.

ESTEBAN *is seated at a small table, taking lunch.* RAIMUNDA *waits upon him, seated also.* JULIANA *comes and goes, assisting with the service.* ACACIA *sits in a low chair near one of the windows, sewing. A basket of clothes stands beside her.*

RAIMUNDA. Don't you like it?

ESTEBAN. Of course I do.

RAIMUNDA. You haven't eaten anything. Do you want us to cook something else?

ESTEBAN. Don't bother me, my dear. I have had plenty.

RAIMUNDA. You don't expect me to believe that. [*Calling*] Juliana! Bring the salad!—Something is the matter with you.

ESTEBAN. Don't be silly.

RAIMUNDA. Don't you suppose that I know you by this time? You ought never to have gone to the village. You've heard talk. We came out here to the grove to get rid of it all, to be away from the excitement, and it was a good thing, too, that we did. Now you go back to the village and don't say one word to me about it. What did you want to do that for?

ESTEBAN. I wanted to see Norbert and his father.

RAIMUNDA. Yes, but you could have sent for them and have had them come out here. You ought to have spared

yourself; then you wouldn't have heard all this talk. I know how they are talking in the village.

JULIANA. Yes, and that is all the good it does us to stay out here and shut ourselves up from everybody, because everybody that goes anywhere in the neighborhood passes through this grove, and then they stop, and smell around, and meddle in what is none of their business.

ESTEBAN. Yes, and you meddle with every one of them.

JULIANA. No, señor; don't you make any mistake. I meddle with nobody. Didn't I scold Bernabea only yesterday for talking more than she had any right to with some men from Encinar who were coming down the road? If any one asks questions send them to me, because I've learned what to do from my mother, who had good reason to know: When questioned much, answer little, and be sure you make it just the opposite.

RAIMUNDA. Hold your tongue! And get out. [JULIANA *retires*] What do they say in the village?

ESTEBAN. Nothing. Tío Eusebio and his boys swear they are going to kill Norbert. They refuse to accept the decision of the court; he got off too easily. They are coming over some day, and then there will be trouble. You hear both sides in the village. Some think that Tío Eusebio is right, that it must have been Norbert; others think it wasn't Norbert. They say that the court let him go because he was innocent, and he proved it.

RAIMUNDA. That is what I think. No one could contradict his deposition; not even Faustino's father could find any flaws in it, nor the hands. You couldn't yourself, and you were with them.

ESTEBAN. Tío Eusebio and I had stopped to light our cigars. We were laughing like two fools because I had my lighter, and it wouldn't light; so Tío Eusebio got out his

tinder and flint and said to me, laughing: "Here, get a light, and don't waste your time with that new-fangled machine. All it is good for is to help fools waste their money. I still make out with this." That was what blinded us. We were fooling over the light when the shot was fired. We started up and could see nothing. Then, when we saw that he had dropped dead, we stood stock-still, as dead as he was. They could have finished us, too, while they were about it, and we would never have known it.

ACACIA *gets up suddenly and starts to go out.*

RAIMUNDA. Where are you going, my dear? Don't be nervous.

ACACIA. You never talk about anything else. I don't see how you can stand it. Hasn't he told us how it happened over and over again? Do we have to hear the same thing all the time?

ESTEBAN. She is right. If I had my way, I'd never mention it again; it's your mother.

ACACIA. I even dream about it at night. I never used to be nervous when I was alone or in the dark, but now I am frightened to death, even in broad daylight.

RAIMUNDA. You are not the only one, either. I get no rest, day nor night. I never used to be afraid. I thought nothing of passing the cemetery after dark, not even on All Souls' Eve, but now the least thing makes me jump, no matter what—noise, silence. To tell the truth, as long as we thought it was Norbert, although he was one of the family, and it would have been a shame and a disgrace to us all, at the same time it couldn't be helped; there was nothing to do but resign oneself—and I had resigned myself. After all, it had an explanation. But now, if it wasn't Norbert, if nobody knows who it was, and nobody can explain why it was that that poor boy was shot—I can't be easy in my mind.

If it wasn't Norbert, who could have wished him any harm? Maybe it was revenge, some enemy of his father's, or of yours —how do we know but that the shot was intended for you, and since it was night and pitch-dark, they made a mistake, and what they didn't do then they will another time, and.... I can't stand this suspense! I get no rest! Every time that you go out of the house and show yourself on the road, it seems to me that I will go crazy. To-day, when you were late, I was just starting for the village myself.

ACACIA. She was out on the road already.

RAIMUNDA. Yes, only I saw you and Rubio from the top of the hill, so I turned and ran back before you passed the mill, so you wouldn't be angry. I know it is foolish, but now I want to be with you all the time, wherever you go— I can't bear to be separated from you for one moment. Otherwise I can't be happy. This isn't living.

ESTEBAN. I don't believe anybody wishes me any harm. I never wronged any man. I go wherever I please, without so much as giving it a thought, day or night.

RAIMUNDA. I used to feel the same; there is nobody who could wish us harm. We have helped so many. But all that you need is one enemy, one envious, evil mind. How do we know but that we have some enemy without our suspecting it? A second shot might come from the same quarter as the first. Norbert is free because they couldn't prove that he was guilty; and I am glad of it. Why shouldn't I be glad when he is my own sister's son—my favorite sister's? I could never have believed that Norbert could have done such a thing as murder a man in the dark! But is this to be the end of it? What is the law doing now? Why don't they investigate, why doesn't some one speak? Somebody must know, somebody must have seen whoever it was that was there that day, hovering along the road. When every-

thing is all right, everybody knows who is passing, and what is going on—who comes and who goes—you hear it all without asking; but when you want to know, then nobody knows, nobody has seen anything.

ESTEBAN. I can't see why that is so strange. When a man is going about his business, he has nothing to conceal; but when his intentions are evil, naturally the first thing he does is to hide himself.

RAIMUNDA. Who do you think that it was?

ESTEBAN. I? To tell the truth, I thought it was Norbert, the same as you. If it wasn't Norbert, I don't know who it was.

RAIMUNDA. I suppose you won't like it, but I'll tell you what I have made up my mind to do.

ESTEBAN. What?

RAIMUNDA. Talk to Norbert. Bernabé has gone to find him. I expect him any minute.

ACACIA. Norbert? What do you want to talk to him for?

ESTEBAN. That is what I say. What does he know about it?

RAIMUNDA. How can I tell? But I know he won't lie to me. By the memory of his mother, I will make him tell me the truth. If he did it, he knows I will never tell. I can't stand this any longer. I shake all over.

ESTEBAN. Do you suppose that Norbert is going to tell you if he was the one who did it?

RAIMUNDA. After I talk to him I shall know.

ESTEBAN. Well, have your own way. It will only make more talk and hard feeling, especially since Tío Eusebio is coming over to-day. If they meet....

RAIMUNDA. They won't meet on the road, because they

come from different directions. After they are here the house is big enough. We can take care of them both.

JULIANA *enters.*

JULIANA. Master....

ESTEBAN. Why are you always bothering me?

JULIANA. Tío Eusebio is coming down the road. Maybe you don't want to see him; I thought you might like to know....

ESTEBAN. Why shouldn't I want to see him? Didn't I tell you he was coming?—Now bring in the other one!

RAIMUNDA. Yes, he can't come too soon to please me.

ESTEBAN. Who told you that I didn't want to see Tío Eusebio?

JULIANA. Oh, don't blame it on me! It wasn't my fault. Rubio says you don't want to see him because he is mad at you. You didn't side with him in court, and that's the reason that Norbert went free.

ESTEBAN. I'll teach Rubio it's none of his business whom I side with.

JULIANA. Yes, and there are other things you might teach him while you are about it. Have I nothing to do but wait on that man? God help me, he has had more to drink to-day than is good for him. And that isn't talk, either.

RAIMUNDA. This is the last straw! Where is he?

ESTEBAN. No, leave him to me.

RAIMUNDA. Everything goes wrong in this house. Everybody takes advantage of you as soon as anything is the matter. You don't need to turn your back—it's instinct. They know when you can't take care of yourself.

JULIANA. I'll not take that from you, Raimunda, if you mean me.

RAIMUNDA. You know who I mean. Take it any way you like.

JULIANA. Señor, señor! What curse has fallen on this house? We are all poisoned, snared, our feet are caught in some evil vine; we are changed. One takes it out on the other, and everybody is against me. God help me, I say, and give me the strength to endure it!

RAIMUNDA. Yes, and give me the strength to endure you.

JULIANA. Yes, me! It is all my fault.

RAIMUNDA. Look at me, will you? Do I have to tell you to your face to get out? That's all I want from you.

JULIANA. Yes, you want me to shut up like a tomb. Well, I'll shut up, God help me! Señor! Let me out! Don't talk to me! [*Goes out.*

ESTEBAN. Here comes Tío Eusebio.

ACACIA. I am going. He breaks down and cries whenever he sees me. He doesn't know what he is doing, but it's always the wrong thing. Does he think he is the only one who has lost anything?

RAIMUNDA. I am sure I have cried as much as his mother has. Tío Eusebio is not the same man; he forgets. But never mind. You are right not to see him.

ACACIA. I have finished the shirts, mother. I'll iron them as soon as I have time.

ESTEBAN. Were you sewing for me?

ACACIA. You can see for yourself.

RAIMUNDA. I don't know how we'd get on if she didn't sew. I am not good for anything. I don't know whether I am alive or dead, God help me! But she can work. She gets through with it somehow. [*She caresses* ACACIA *affectionately as she passes out*] God bless you, Acacia, my child! [ACACIA *goes out*] It is a terrible responsibility to be a mother. For a long time I was afraid that she was going to get mar-

ried and leave me. Now, what wouldn't I give to see her married?

Tío Eusebio *enters.*

Eusebio. Hello! Where is everybody?

Esteban. Come in, Tío Eusebio.

Eusebio. Good morning to both.

Raimunda. Good morning, Tío Eusebio.

Esteban. Where are your horses? I'll have them put up.

Eusebio. My man will tend to that.

Esteban. Sit down. Come, a glass of that wine he likes so much, Raimunda.

Eusebio. No, no, thank you. I am not feeling well. Wine doesn't agree with me.

Esteban. This wine will do you good. It's a tonic.

Raimunda. Suit yourself. How are you, Tío Eusebio? How is Julia?

Eusebio. Julia? What do you expect? I am going to lose her just as I did the boy; I can see it.

Raimunda. God forbid! Hasn't she four sons yet to live for?

Eusebio. Yes, the more worry! That is what is killing her—worry. Nobody knows what will happen next. Our hearts are broken. We were sure that we would get justice; but now we are bitter. Everybody said it would be like this, but we didn't believe it. The murderer is alive—you pass him on the street; he goes home to his house, shuts the door, and laughs at us. It only proves what I knew all the time. There is no such thing in this world as justice, unless a man takes it with his own hands, which is what they will drive us to do now. That is why I wanted to see you yesterday. If my boys come into the village, send them home. Don't let them stay around. Arrest them—anything rather than another tragedy in our house; although I don't want to see

his murderer go free—the murderer of my boy—unless God avenges him, as he must, by God!—or else there is no justice in heaven.

RAIMUNDA. Don't turn against God, Tío Eusebio. Though the hand of justice never fall upon him after the foul murder he has done, yet there is not one of us that would be in his place. He is alone with his conscience. I would not have what he has on his soul upon mine, for all the blessings of this world. We have lived good lives, we have done evil to no man, yet all our days are purgatory and torment. He must have hell in his heart after what he has done—of that we can be sure—as sure as of the day of our death.

EUSEBIO. That is cold comfort to me. How does it help me prevent my boys from taking the law into their own hands? Justice has not been done—and it should have been done. Now they are the ones who will go to jail for it! They will make good their threats too. You ought to hear them. Even the little fellow, who is only twelve, doubles up his fists like a man, and swears that whoever killed his brother will have to reckon with him, come what may. I sit there and cry like a child. I needn't tell you how his mother feels. And all the while I have it in my heart to say: Go, my sons! Stone him until he is dead! Cut him to pieces like a hound! Drag his carcass home to me through the mire—what offal there is left of it! Instead I swallow it all and look grave, and tell them that it is wrong even to think of such a thing —it would kill their mother, it would ruin all of us!

RAIMUNDA. You are unreasonable, Tío Eusebio. Norbert is innocent; the law says so. No one could bring the least proof against him; he proved where he was, and what he was doing all that day, one hour after the other. He and his men were up at Los Berrocales. Don Faustino, the doctor, saw him there and talked with him at the very hour it took place,

and he is from Encinar. You know yourself no man can be in two places at the same time. You might think that his own people had been told to say what they did, although it isn't an easy thing for so many to agree on a lie; but Don Faustino is a friend of yours; he is in your debt. And others who would naturally have been on your side said the same. Only one shepherd from Los Berrocales would testify that he had seen a man at that hour, and that was a great way off; but he had no idea who it was. From his clothes and the way that he carried himself he was sure that it could not have been Norbert.

EUSEBIO. If it wasn't, I say nothing. Does it make it any better for us that he hired some one else to do it? There can't be any doubt; there is no other explanation. I have no enemies who would do such a thing. I never harmed any man; I help every one, whether they are our own people or not. I make it easy. If I were to sue for one-half the damage that is done me every day, it would take all of my time. I will die a poor man. They killed Faustino because he was going to marry Acacia. That is all there is to it. Nobody could have had any such reason but Norbert. If everybody had told what they knew, the trial would have ended right there. But the ones who knew most said the least; they said nothing.

RAIMUNDA. Do you mean us?

EUSEBIO. I don't say who I mean.

RAIMUNDA. It is plain enough; you don't have to mention names nor point your finger. Do you mean to say that we keep quiet because Norbert is one of our family?

EUSEBIO. Do you mean to say that Acacia doesn't know more about this thing than she is willing to admit?

RAIMUNDA. No, sir, she knows no more about it than you do. You have made up your mind that it was Norbert be-

cause you want to make yourself believe that nobody else has anything against you. We are none of us saints, Tío Eusebio. You may have done a great deal of good in your time, but you must also have done some evil; you think that nobody remembers, but maybe the ones who have suffered don't think the same. If Norbert had been in love with my daughter to that extent, he would have shown it before now. Your son didn't take her away from him, remember that. Faustino never said one word until after she was done with Norbert, and she turned him off because she knew he was going with another girl. He never so much as took the trouble to excuse himself, so that when you come down to it, he was the one who left her. That is no reason why any one should commit murder. You can see it yourself.

EUSEBIO. Then why did everybody say that it couldn't have been any one else? You said so yourself; everybody said so.

RAIMUNDA. Yes, because at first he was the only one we could think of. But when you look at it calmly, it is foolish to say that he is the only one who could have done it. You insinuate that we have something to conceal. Once for all, let me tell you, we are more anxious than you are to have the truth known, to have this thing out and be done with it. You have lost a son, but I have a daughter who is alive, and she has nothing to gain, either, by this mystery.

EUSEBIO. No, she hasn't. Much less when she keeps her mouth shut. And you haven't anything to gain. You don't know what Norbert and his father say about this house so as to divert suspicion from themselves? If I believed what they said....

RAIMUNDA. About us? What do they say? [*To* ESTEBAN] You have been in the village. What do they say?

ESTEBAN. Nobody cares what they say.

EUSEBIO. No, I don't believe one word that comes from them. I am only telling you how they repay the kindness you do them by taking their part.

RAIMUNDA. So you are on that tack again? Tío Eusebio, I have to stop and force myself to think what it must mean to lose a child, or I would lose control of myself. I am a mother, God knows, yet you come here and insult my daughter. You insult all of us.

ESTEBAN. Wife! Enough of this. What is the use? Tío Eusebio....

EUSEBIO. I insult nobody. I only repeat what other people say. You suppress the truth because he is one of the family. The whole village is the same. What you are afraid of is the disgrace. People here may think that it was not Norbert, but in Encinar, let me tell you, they think that it was. If justice isn't done—and done quick—blood will be spilled between these villages, and nobody can stop it, either. You know what young blood is.

RAIMUNDA. Yes, and you are the one who stirs it up. You respect neither God nor man. Why, didn't you just admit that Norbert couldn't have done it unless he had hired some one to commit the murder? Nonsense! It isn't so easy to hire a man to commit murder. What had a boy like Norbert to give, anyway?—Unless you want us to believe that his father had a hand in it.

EUSEBIO. Bah! Rogues come cheap. How about the Valderrobles? They live here. Didn't they kill two goatherds for three and a half duros?

RAIMUNDA. How long was it before they were found out? They fought over the half duro. When you hire a man to do a deed like that, you put yourself in his power; you become his slave for the rest of your life. There may be people who can afford to do such things, but they must be rich, they must have power. Not a boy like Norbert!

EUSEBIO. Every family has a faithful servant who will do what he is told.

RAIMUNDA. No doubt yours has. No doubt you have had occasion to use him too; you know so much about it.

EUSEBIO. Take care what you say!

RAIMUNDA. Take care yourself!

ESTEBAN. Raimunda! Enough of this. What is the use of all this talk?

EUSEBIO. Well, you hear what she says. How about you?

ESTEBAN. If we dwell on this forever, we shall all of us go mad.

EUSEBIO. Yes. You heard what I said.

RAIMUNDA. If you mean by that that you don't intend to let this matter drop until you have found the murderer of your boy, it is only right and proper, and I respect you for it. But that is no reason why you should come here and insult us. Once for all, you may want justice, but I want it more than you do. I pray to God for it every day, I pray him on my knees not to let the murderer go free—and I should pray to him just the same if I had a boy—if it had been my own boy that did it!

RUBIO *appears in the doorway.*

RUBIO. How about me, master?

ESTEBAN. Well, Rubio?

RUBIO. Don't look at me like that; I'm not drunk. We started out before lunch, that was all. I had an invitation and took a drop; it went against me. I'm sorry you feel that way about it.

RAIMUNDA. What is the matter with him? Juliana was right.

RUBIO. Tell Juliana to mind her business, will you? I just wanted to tell the master.

ESTEBAN. Rubio! You can tell me later whatever you like. Tío Eusebio is here. Don't you see? We are busy.

RUBIO. Tío Eusebio? So he is. What does he want?

RAIMUNDA. Is it any of your business what he wants? Get out! Go along and sleep it off. You don't know what you are talking about.

RUBIO. I know, señora. Don't say that to me.

ESTEBAN. Rubio!

RUBIO. Juliana's a fool; I don't drink. It was my money, anyhow. I'm no thief. What I have is my own; and my wife is my own, too. She owes nobody anything, eh, master?

ESTEBAN. Rubio! Go along! Get to bed, and don't show yourself again until you have had a good sleep. What is the matter with you? What will Tío Eusebio think?

RUBIO. I don't know. I don't take anything, understand —from anybody. [*Goes out.*

RAIMUNDA. What was it that you were just saying about servants, Tío Eusebio? This man has us with our hearts in our throats, yet he is nothing to us. Suppose we had trusted him with some secret? What is the matter with Rubio, anyway? Is he going to get drunk every day? He was never like this before. You ought not to put up with it.

ESTEBAN. Don't you see? He isn't used to it. That is the reason he is upset by a thimbleful. Somebody invited him into the tavern while I was tending to my business. I gave him a piece of my mind and sent him to bed, but he hasn't slept it off yet. He is drunk. That is all there is to it.

EUSEBIO. Perfectly natural. Is that all?

ESTEBAN. Drop in again, Tío Eusebio.

EUSEBIO. Thanks. I am sorry this happened—after I took the trouble to come.

RAIMUNDA. Nonsense! Nothing has happened. We have no hard feeling.

EUSEBIO. No, and I hope you won't have any. Remember what I've been through. My heart is broken—it's not

scratched. It won't heal either until God claims another one of his own. How long do you expect to stay in the grove?

ESTEBAN. Till Sunday. We have nothing to keep us. We only wanted to be out of the village. Now that Norbert is home, it is nothing but talk, talk, talk.

EUSEBIO. That's right—nothing but talk. If you see my boys around, look out! I don't want them to get into any trouble, which afterward we might have cause to regret.

ESTEBAN. Don't you worry. They won't get into any while I am around. Blame it on me if they do.

EUSEBIO. They're working down by the river now. They'll be all right unless somebody happens along and stirs them up. God be with you, I say. Adios! Where is Acacia?

RAIMUNDA. I told her not to come down, so as to spare your feelings. It is hard on her, too; it brings back everything.

EUSEBIO. That's so. It must.

ESTEBAN. I'll send for your horses.

EUSEBIO. No, I can call myself.—Francisco!—Here he comes. Take care of yourselves. God be with you!

[*They move toward the door.*

RAIMUNDA. God be with you, Tío Eusebio. Tell Julia not to worry. I think of her every day. I have prayed more for her than I have for the boy—God has forgiven him by this time. Surely he never did anything to deserve such a bad end! My heart bleeds for him.

ESTEBAN *and* TÍO EUSEBIO *have passed out while she is speaking.*

BERNABÉ *enters.*

BERNABÉ. Señora!

RAIMUNDA. Is Norbert here? Could you find him?

BERNABÉ. Yes, I brought him along so as to save time. He wanted to see you himself.

RAIMUNDA. Didn't you meet Tío Eusebio?

BERNABÉ. No, we saw him coming up from the river when we were a long way off, so we turned and went in by the great corral. Norbert is hiding there until Tío Eusebio starts back to Encinar.

RAIMUNDA. There he goes up the road now.

BERNABÉ. Yes—under the great cross.

RAIMUNDA. Tell Norbert. No—wait! What do they say in the village?

BERNABÉ. No good, señora. The law is going to have its hands full before it gets to the bottom of this.

RAIMUNDA. Does anybody think it was Norbert?

BERNABÉ. You would get your head broke if you said it was. When he came back yesterday, half the town was out to meet him. Everybody was sitting by the roadside. They took him up on their shoulders and carried him home. The women all cried, and the men hugged him. I thought his father would die for joy.

RAIMUNDA. He never did it. Poor Norbert!

BERNABÉ. They say the men are coming over from Encinar to kill him; everybody here carries a club and goes armed.

RAIMUNDA. Mother of God! Did anything go wrong with the master while he was in the village this morning? What did you hear?

BERNABÉ. So they have been talking to you?

RAIMUNDA. No. That is—yes; I know.

BERNABÉ. Rubio was in the tavern and began to say things, so I ran for the master, and he came and ordered him out. He was insolent to the master. He was drunk.

RAIMUNDA. Do you remember what he said? I mean Rubio.

BERNABÉ. Oh! His tongue ran away with him. He was drunk. Do you know what I think? If I were you, I wouldn't go back to the village for two or three days.

RAIMUNDA. No, certainly not. If I had my way we would never go back. I am filled with a loathing for it all so great that I want to rush out, and down that long road, and then on and up and over those mountains to the other side, and after that I don't know where I would hide myself. I feel as if some one were running after me, after me, always after me, with more than death in his heart. But the master.... Where is the master?

BERNABÉ. Seeing to Rubio.

RAIMUNDA. Tell Norbert to come in. I can't wait.

BERNABÉ *goes out.*

NORBERT *enters.*

NORBERT. Aunt Raimunda!

RAIMUNDA. Norbert, my boy! Give me a hug.

NORBERT. I am so glad you sent for me. I've been treated like a dog. It's a good thing that my mother is dead and in heaven. I am glad she never lived to see this day. Next to my father, there is nobody in the world I think so much of as I do of you.

RAIMUNDA. I could never have believed that you did it—not though everybody said so.

NORBERT. I know it; you were the first to take my part. Where is Acacia?

RAIMUNDA. In her room. We have our fill of trouble in this house.

NORBERT. Who says I killed Faustino? If I hadn't proved, as I did prove, where I was all that day, if I'd done as I meant at first and taken my gun and gone off to hunt

alone by myself, and then couldn't have proved where I was, because nobody had seen me, I would have spent the rest of my life in prison. They would have had me.

RAIMUNDA. Are you crying?

NORBERT. No, I am not crying; but I cried when I found myself in that prison. If anybody had ever told me that I would ever go to prison, I would never have believed it; I'd have laughed in his face. But that isn't the worst. Tío Eusebio and his boys have sworn to kill me. They will never believe that I am innocent; they know I murdered Faustino. They are as sure of it as I am that my mother lies under the ground!

RAIMUNDA. Because nobody knows who did it. Nobody can find out anything. Don't you see? They will never rest at that. Do you suspect any one?

NORBERT. I more than suspect.

RAIMUNDA. Then why didn't you say so? You were in court. You had the opportunity.

NORBERT. If I hadn't cleared myself I would have told. But what was the use? I am a dead man now if I speak. They will do the same thing to me.

RAIMUNDA. Eh? Will they? What do you mean? Was it revenge? But who did it? Tell me what you think. I must know, because Tío Eusebio and Esteban have always had the same friends; they have always stood together, for better or for worse, whichever it was. Their enemies would naturally be the same. Now, I can get no rest. This vengeance was intended for us just as much as it was for Tío Eusebio; it was to prevent a closer union of our families. Maybe they won't stop at that, either. Some day they will do the same to my husband!

NORBERT. I wouldn't worry about Uncle Esteban.

RAIMUNDA. Why, what do you mean? Do you think?....

NORBERT. I don't think.

RAIMUNDA. Then tell me what you know. Somehow I believe you are not the only one who knows it. You think what the rest think—it must be the same—what everybody knows.

NORBERT. Well, they didn't get it out of me; that is one thing you can be sure of. Besides, how could they know? It's gossip, that's all—not worth that! Talk in the village! They will never get it out of me.

RAIMUNDA. Norbert, by the soul of your sainted mother in heaven, tell me what it is!

NORBERT. For God's sake, I can't talk! I was afraid to open my mouth in court. Now, if I say a word, I am a dead man. A dead man!

RAIMUNDA. But who would kill you?

NORBERT. Who killed Faustino?

RAIMUNDA. But who did kill Faustino? Some one was paid to do it, is that it? Rubio said something in the wine-shop this morning.

NORBERT. Who told you?

RAIMUNDA. Esteban went in and dragged him out; it was the only way he could stop him.

NORBERT. He didn't want to be compromised.

RAIMUNDA. What is that? He didn't want to be compromised? Was Rubio saying that he....

NORBERT. That he was the real master of this house.

RAIMUNDA. The master of this house? Because it was Rubio....

NORBERT. Rubio.

RAIMUNDA. Who killed Faustino?

NORBERT. *Sí, señora.*

RAIMUNDA. Rubio! I knew it all the time. But does

anybody else know? That is the question. Do they know it in the village?

NORBERT. He gives himself away; he has money—bills, bank-notes—wherever he goes. He turned on them this morning while they were singing that song. That was why they had to call Uncle Esteban, and he kicked him out of the wine-shop.

RAIMUNDA. That song? Oh, yes! That song—I remember. It goes.... How does it go?

NORBERT.

"Who loves the maid that dwells by the Mill
Shall love in evil hour;
Because she loves with the love that she loves,
Call her the Passion Flower."

RAIMUNDA. We are the ones who dwell by the Mill; that is what they call us. It is here—our house. And the maid that dwells by the Mill must be Acacia, my daughter. This song that everybody sings.... They call her the Passion Flower? That is it, isn't it? But who loves her in any evil way? How could anybody love her? You loved her, Faustino loved her; but who else ever loved her? Why do they call her the Passion Flower? Look me in the eye! Why did you give her up if you really loved her? Why? I want you to tell me; you have got to tell me. You cannot tell me anything worse than what I already know.

NORBERT. Do you want them to kill me? To ruin all of us? I have never said one word—not even when they had me in prison would I say one word! I don't know how it got out—Rubio told, or my father. He is the only one who ever had it from me. He wanted to put the law on them, but I said no. They would have killed him; they would have killed me!

RAIMUNDA. Stop! Don't you talk! I see it now. I see it all. The Passion Flower! *La Malquerida!* Come here to me! Tell me everything. Before they kill you, by God, they will have to kill me! It cannot go on like this. Somebody must pay for it. Tío Eusebio and his boys will never rest till they have justice. If they can't get it in any other way, they will take it out of you—revenge! You can't escape. Faustino was murdered so as to prevent him from marrying Acacia. You left her for the same reason—for fear that they would kill you. Was that it? Tell me the truth!

NORBERT. They told me to leave her because she was promised to Faustino; she had been for a long time. They said they had an understanding with Tío Eusebio, and if I didn't make the best of it, then I could take the worst of it. But if I ever opened my mouth....

RAIMUNDA. They would kill you? Was that it? But you....

NORBERT. I believed it—I was afraid—I didn't know what to do. Then I began to run after another girl, who was nothing to me, so as to break off with Acacia. Afterward, when I found out that not a word of it was true, that niether Tío Eusebio nor Faustino had ever spoken to Uncle Esteban.... Then, when they killed Faustino I knew why they killed him. It was because he dared lay eyes on Acacia. There was nothing they could tell him. They couldn't scare him off. Tío Eusebio wasn't a man to stand by and see his son refused. They couldn't refuse, so they agreed to it, and went through with it until the end came, and they killed him. They killed him because I was here to take the blame. Who else could have done it? Of course it was I! I loved Acacia—I was jealous. That was the plot. Praise God, some saint surely watched over me that day! But

now the crime has come home to him. It lies like lead on his conscience. He betrays himself....

RAIMUNDA. Is it possible that such a thing could be? I must have been blind not to see. What veil hung over my eyes? Why, it is all as clear as day! How could I have been so blind?

NORBERT. What are you doing?

RAIMUNDA. I don't know—I don't know where I am—something so awful, so vast is passing through my mind that it seems as if it were nothing. I can only remember one thing of all that you have told me—that song—*La Malquerida!* The Passion Flower! I want you to teach me the music. We can sing it together, and dance—dance and drop dead!—Acacia! Acacia! Acacia!

NORBERT. No, don't you call her! Don't take it like this! It wasn't her fault!

ACACIA *enters.*

ACACIA. Did you call, mother?—Norbert!

RAIMUNDA. Come here! Look at me—straight in the eye.

ACACIA. What is the matter with you, mother?

RAIMUNDA. No, it was not your fault.

ACACIA. But what have they been doing? What did you tell her?

RAIMUNDA. What every one else knows already—*La Malquerida!* The Passion Flower! Your honor is a scorn and a byword. It is bandied about in men's mouths!

ACACIA. My honor? Never! No one can say that.

RAIMUNDA. Don't you deny it! Tell me what you know. Why was it that you never called him father? Why was it?

ACACIA. Because a child has only one father, you know that. This man could never be my father. I hated, I despised him from the day that he entered this house, and brought hell along after him!

RAIMUNDA. Well, you are going to call him now, and you are going to call him what I tell you; you are going to call him father. Do you hear? Your father! I tell you to call your father.

ACACIA. Do you want me to go to the cemetery and call him? If that isn't what you want, I have no father. This man—this man is your husband; you love him, but all that he is to me is this man! This man! That is all he can ever be! Leave me alone if you know what is good for you—you think you are so smart. Let the law take its course. I don't care. If he has sinned, he can pay for it.

RAIMUNDA. Do you mean for Faustino's murder? Yes—go on! Go on! What else? Out with it!

ACACIA. No, mother, no! For if I had consented, Faustino would never have been murdered! Do you think I don't know how to guard my honor?

RAIMUNDA. Then what have you been so silent about? Why didn't you come to me?

ACACIA. Would you have taken my word against this man, when you were mad for him? And you must have been mad not to see! He would eat me up with his eyes while you sat there; he followed me around the house like a cat. What more do you want? I hated him so, I had such a horror of him that I prayed to God that he would make himself even more of a beast than he was, so that it would open your eyes, if anything could have opened your eyes, and let you see what manner of man he was who had robbed me of your love, for you have loved him, you have loved him so much—more than you ever loved my father!

RAIMUNDA. No! That isn't true!

ACACIA. I wanted you to hate him as I hate him, as my father in heaven hates him! I have heard his voice from the skies.

RAIMUNDA. Silence! For shame! Come here to your mother. You are all that I have left in the world. And thank God that I can still protect you!

BERNABÉ *enters.*

BERNABÉ. Señora! Señora!

RAIMUNDA. What brings you running in such a hurry? No good, we may be sure.

BERNABÉ. Don't let Norbert leave the house! Don't let him out of your sight!

RAIMUNDA. How?

BERNABÉ. Tío Eusebio's boys are waiting outside with their men to kill him.

NORBERT. What did I tell you? You wouldn't believe it. They are here—they want to kill me! And they will kill me. Yes, they will!

RAIMUNDA. Not unless they kill us all first! Somebody has sent for them.

BERNABÉ. Yes, Rubio. I saw him running along the river bank where Tío Eusebio's boys were at work.

NORBERT. Didn't I tell you? They want to kill me, so as to save themselves. Then nothing will ever come out. Tío Eusebio's boys will think they have the man who murdered their brother. They will kill me, Aunt Raimunda! Yes, they will! They are too many for one; I can't defend myself. I haven't even a knife. I don't dare to carry a gun—I might kill some one. I'd rather die than be locked up in that cell again. Save me, Aunt Raimunda! I don't want to die. It wasn't my fault! They hunt me like a wolf.

RAIMUNDA. Don't be afraid. If they kill you, it will be over my dead body. Go in there with Bernabé and take that gun, do you hear? They won't dare to come in. If they do, shoot to kill! When I call, shoot—no matter who

it may be! Do you understand? No matter who it may be! Don't shut the door. [*To* ACACIA] You stand here by me. Esteban! Esteban! Esteban!

ACACIA. What are you going to do?

ESTEBAN *enters.*

ESTEBAN. Did you call?

RAIMUNDA. Yes, I want to speak to you. Norbert is here in our house. Tío Eusebio's boys are waiting outside. You sent for them to kill him—because you are not man enough to do it yourself.

ESTEBAN. [*Making a movement to draw a weapon*] Raimunda!

ACACIA. Mother!

RAIMUNDA. No, don't you do it! Call Rubio and let him make an end of us all! He will have to make an end of us all to cover your guilt. Murderer! Assassin!

ESTEBAN. You are crazy!

RAIMUNDA. I was crazy! I was crazy the day that you first entered this house—my house—like a thief, to rob me of all I held dear!

ESTEBAN. What are you talking about?

RAIMUNDA. I am not talking; other people are talking. Soon the law will speak. If you don't want that, do as I tell you, or I will cry out—I will rouse the house. You brought them here—take them away again, you cowards that lie in wait for innocent men, to stab them in the back! Norbert leaves this house, but he leaves with me. If they kill him, they kill me. I am here to protect him, and I will protect my daughter—I, alone, against you, against all the assassins you can hire! Go! Here come my people.... Don't you touch me! Hide yourself in the uttermost recesses of those mountains, in caves where the wild beasts dwell. Now I know! You have nothing to hope for from me.

Oh, I was alone with my child!—and you came. You knew that she was my child; there she stands—*La Malquerida!* The Passion Flower! Well! I am still here to guard her from you, to tell you that her father still lives in heaven—and to shoot you through the heart if you make one step to lay your hand on her!

Curtain

THE THIRD ACT

The scene is the same as in the Second Act. RAIMUNDA *stands at the door, peering anxiously out over the countryside. After a moment* JULIANA *enters.*

JULIANA. Raimunda!

RAIMUNDA. What do you want? Is he worse?

JULIANA. No, don't be nervous.

RAIMUNDA. How is he? Why did you leave him?

JULIANA. He's asleep. Acacia is with him; she can hear if he calls. You are the one I am worried about. Thank God, he's not dead. Do you expect to go all day without eating?

RAIMUNDA. Let me alone; don't bother me.

JULIANA. What are you doing out here? Come on in and sit with us.

RAIMUNDA. I was looking for Bernabé.

JULIANA. He can't be back so soon if he brings the men to take Norbert away. If the constables come with him....

RAIMUNDA. Constables? Constables in this house? Ah, Juliana, surely a curse has fallen upon us all!

JULIANA. Come on in, and don't be looking out of the door all the time. It's not Bernabé that you are looking for; it's the other one—it's your husband. When all is said and done, he is your husband.

RAIMUNDA. Yes, the habits of a lifetime cannot be changed in one day. Although I know what I know, and that it must always be so, although if I saw him coming it would be to curse him, although I must loathe him for the rest of my life, yet here I stand looking out of the door and scan-

ning every rock and cranny upon those mountains only for a sight of him! It seems to me as if I were waiting for him as I used to do, to see him come happy and smiling, and then turn and walk into the house with him arm in arm like two lovers, and sit down here at the table to eat, and go over everything that we had done during the day. Sometimes we would laugh, sometimes we would argue, but always it was so dear, as if we had been fonder of each other than any one else who had ever lived in the world. Now it is all over; nothing remains. The peace of God has fled forever from this house!

JULIANA. You cannot believe what you see with your eyes. If you hadn't told me yourself, if I didn't know how you felt, how you were, I would never have believed it. Faustino is dead, God help him; we can leave it. There might be more of the sort, too, for all I care; but this devil that has gotten into him with Acacia, it doesn't seem possible, I can't believe it—although I must believe it. There is no other explanation of the mystery.

RAIMUNDA. Did you never notice anything?

JULIANA. Nothing. When he first came to the house, it was to make love to you, and I needn't tell you how I felt. I was fond of your first husband; there never was a better nor juster man in the world, so I looked on him with disfavor. God have mercy on me, but if I had seen anything, what reason would I have had for keeping quiet? Of course, when you come to think, he gave her presents—and there were a good many of them, too—but we never thought anything of that. She was so haughty with him. They never had one good talk together from the day you were married. She was only a runt then anyway. She insulted him out of pure spite. Nobody could do anything with her. If you struck her, it made no difference. I'll say this while I am

about it: if she had been nice to him when she was little, he might have looked on her as his own daughter. Then we would never have been where we are now.

RAIMUNDA. Are you trying to excuse him?

JULIANA. Excuse him? There can be no excuse for such a thing. It was enough that she was your daughter. What I say is that the girl was like a stranger to him from the beginning, although she was your own child. If she had treated him like a father, as she ought—it would have been different; he isn't a bad man. A bad man is bad through and through. When you were first married, I've seen him sit by himself and cry at the way the girl ran from him, as if he had had the plague.

RAIMUNDA. You are right. The only trouble we ever had was with the child.

JULIANA. After she was grown there wasn't a girl in the village that was her equal for looks. Nobody knows that better than you do. But she shrank from him as if he had been the devil. There she was all the time—right before his eyes! No wonder if he had an evil thought; none of us are above them.

RAIMUNDA. I don't say he might not have had an evil thought, although he ought never to have had such a thought. But you put an evil thought out of your mind unless you are evil. He must have had more than an evil thought to do what he did, to murder a man in cold blood to prevent my daughter from marrying and going away—away from him; his mind must have been evil, like the criminal's, waiting to break out, with all the evil of the world in his heart. I am more anxious than anybody to believe that it is not so bad, but the more I think, the more I see that there can be no excuse for it. When I remember what has been hanging over my daughter all these years, that any moment—be-

cause a man who will do murder will do anything. If he had ever laid hands on her I would have killed them both, as sure as my name is Raimunda—him, because he had been guilty of such a crime, and her because she did not let him kill her before she would consent to it.

BERNABÉ *enters.*

JULIANA. Here comes Bernabé.

RAIMUNDA. Are you alone?

BERNABÉ. Yes, they are deciding in the village what is best to be done. I was afraid to stay any longer.

RAIMUNDA. You were right. This is not life. What do they say now?

BERNABÉ. Do you want to go mad? Forget it. Pay no attention to what they say.

RAIMUNDA. Are they coming to take Norbert away?

BERNABÉ. His father will tend to that. The doctor won't let them put him in the cart for fear it will make him worse. He'll have to be carried on a stretcher. The judge and the prosecutor are coming to take his story, so they don't want a relapse. He was unconscious yesterday and couldn't testify. Everybody has his own idea; no two agree. Not a soul went to the fields to-day. The men stand around the streets in groups; the women talk in the houses and run to and fro. Nobody stops to eat. Not a meal has been served to-day, dinner or supper either, on the hour.

RAIMUNDA. Didn't you tell them that Norbert's wounds aren't serious?

BERNABÉ. What difference does that make? Now they can't do anything. Yesterday, when they thought Tío Eusebio's boys had fallen on him with the master, and he was going to die, the thing was simple; but to-day they hear he is better. How do they know but that he will soon be

well again? Even Norbert's best friends say that it's a great pity that the wound wasn't serious. If he was wounded at all, it might better have been serious. Then Tío Eusebio's boys could have been made to pay for it, and they would have had their revenge, but now, if he gets well, the law will get into it, and then nobody will be satisfied.

JULIANA. They are so fond of Norbert, are they, that they wish he was dead? The idiots!

BERNABÉ. That is the way they are. I told them they could thank you for it, because you were the one who called the master, and the master threw himself between them and knocked up their guns, so they couldn't kill him.

RAIMUNDA. Did you tell them that?

BERNABÉ. Every mother's son that asked me. I said the first because it was true, and I said the rest—because you don't know what they are saying in the village, nor how they feel about what is going on in this house.

RAIMUNDA. No! I don't want to hear! Where is the master? Have you seen him? Do you know where he is?

BERNABÉ. He and Rubio were up at Los Berrocales this morning with the goatherds from Encinar. They spent the night in a hut on the uplands. I don't like this going away. It's not right, if I know what is good for him. It looks as if he was afraid. This is no time to have people think what isn't so. Norbert's father talks too much. This morning he tried to persuade Tío Eusebio that his sons had had no cause to shoot his boy.

RAIMUNDA. Is Tío Eusebio in the village?

BERNABÉ. He came with his boys. They arrested them this morning, tied them together by the elbows, and brought them over from Encinar. Their father followed on foot and brought the little fellow with him, holding his hand all the way. They cried with every step that they took. There

wasn't a man in the village but cried, too, when he saw them, even the strongest, no matter if he had never cried before.

RAIMUNDA. And his mother is alone at home, and here I am! What do you men know?

ACACIA *enters.*

ACACIA. Mother——

RAIMUNDA. Well? What is it?

ACACIA. Norbert wants you. He is awake now. He wants some water. He is thirsty; I was afraid to give him any for fear it wasn't right.

RAIMUNDA. The doctor says he can have all the orange-juice he can drink. Here's the jar. Does he suffer much?

ACACIA. No, not now.

RAIMUNDA. [*To* BERNABÉ] Did you get the things for the doctor?

BERNABÉ. Yes, they're in the saddle-bags. I'll bring them in. [*Goes out.*

ACACIA. He is calling, mother. Do you hear?

RAIMUNDA. Coming, Norbert, my boy. [*Goes out.*

ACACIA. Has that man come back?

JULIANA. No. He took his gun and rushed out like one mad as soon as it was over. Rubio ran after him.

ACACIA. Have they caught him?

JULIANA. You'll hear soon enough when they do. They'll have to bring charges against him first.

ACACIA. But doesn't everybody know? They heard what my mother said.

JULIANA. No, nobody heard except me and Bernabé, and he won't tell what isn't good for him; he is honest and loyal to this house. They heard your mother shout, that was all. They thought it was because Norbert was here, and Tío Eusebio's boys were waiting outside to kill him. Nobody

will say a word when the judge comes unless your mother tells us to open our mouths.

ACACIA. Do you mean that my mother isn't going to let you tell the truth? Won't she tell what she knows?

JULIANA. Is that what you want? So you want to disgrace this house, do you, and yourself? Then every man will think what he likes; some will believe that you are innocent, and some will never believe it. A woman's honor is not a thing to be bandied about in men's mouths, not when it is none of their business.

ACACIA. My honor? I can take care of my honor. Let the others do the same. Now I shan't marry. I am glad it happened, because I shall never marry. I only agreed to it to get rid of him.

JULIANA. Acacia, I don't want to hear you—not another word. Surely the devil must be in you!

ACACIA. Yes, he is, and he has always been, since I first learned to hate that man!

JULIANA. Yes, and who is to say that wasn't where the trouble began? You had no cause to hate him. Mind you, nobody blamed your mother more than I did when she married again; but all the same, I saw what a devil you were to this man when you were a little child, and how much it meant to him—which you were too young to know.

ACACIA. How much did it mean to me to see my mother always hanging around his neck? Do you suppose I liked it, sitting here and seeing her love him? I was always in the way.

JULIANA. You have no right to talk like that. You were always first with your mother, and you might have been with him.

ACACIA. Might have been? Never! Because I was, and I am.

JULIANA. But not like you mean, though you seem proud of it; in the way you should have been. He never would have loved you as he did if you had loved him as a daughter.

ACACIA. How could I love him? Didn't he turn me even against my own mother?

JULIANA. What do you mean? Turn you against your own mother?

ACACIA. Yes. Do you suppose I can love her now as I ought, as I should have loved her if that man had never entered this house? I remember once when I was a little girl, I spent all one night with a knife under my pillow, and I lay awake all night. The only thought that I had in my mind that night was to kill him.

JULIANA. *Jesús*, my child! What is that? Suppose you had? Suppose you had gotten up, and had dared, and had killed him?

ACACIA. I don't know who I might have killed next.

JULIANA. Holy Virgin! *Jesús!* Not another word. Don't you talk! You are beyond the pale of God's mercy. Do you know what I think? It was all your fault.

ACACIA. All my fault?

JULIANA. Yes, yours! It was your fault! And I'll go further: if you hated him as much as you say you do, then he would have been the only one you would have hated—yes, the only one! *Jesús!* It's a good thing that your mother doesn't know!

ACACIA. Know what?

JULIANA. That he wasn't the one you were jealous of. It was her! You were in love with him and you didn't know it.

ACACIA. In love with him?

JULIANA. Yes, hate turned to love. Nobody can hate like that. A hate like that always grows out of a great love.

ACACIA. Do you mean to say that I was in love with that man? Do you know what you are telling me?

JULIANA. I am not telling you anything.

ACACIA. No. What you will do now is run and tell my mother.

JULIANA. Is that what you are afraid of? I thought so. Now you are the one who is telling. You needn't worry, though. I'll not tell. She has enough on her mind, poor soul. God help us!

BERNABÉ *enters.*

BERNABÉ. Here comes the master!

JULIANA. Did you see him?

BERNABÉ. Yes. You wouldn't know him. He looks as if he had stepped from the grave.

ACACIA. Let me out!

JULIANA. Yes, let us all out—and shut your mouth, do you hear? What is done is done. Your mother must never know. [*The women go out.*

ESTEBAN *and* RUBIO *enter, their guns over their shoulders.*

BERNABÉ. Can—can I do anything?

ESTEBAN. Nothing, Bernabé.

BERNABÉ. I'll tell the mistress.

ESTEBAN. No, don't tell her; they'll find us.

RUBIO. How about his wounds, eh?

BERNABÉ. Better. The doctor sent for these things. I'll take them in—unless you need me. [*Goes out.*

ESTEBAN. Here I am. What do you want me to do?

RUBIO. What do I want you to do? This is your house; you belong here. A man's house is his castle. Running away, being afraid to face it, is to confess. It will ruin us both.

ESTEBAN. Here I am; you have had your way. Now this woman will come and accuse me and raise the house.

The judge will be here, and he will bring Tío Eusebio. What then?

RUBIO. Why didn't you let Tío Eusebio's boys handle it themselves? They would have finished it. Now he is only wounded. He will squeal, and so will his father; so will all the women. They are the ones I am afraid of. They will talk. Nobody can prove who shot Faustino. You were with his father; nobody saw me. I have a good pair of legs. I was with some friends two leagues away a few minutes before, and I set the clock ahead. When I left the house I took good care to have them notice it.

ESTEBAN. Yes, we would have been safe if that had been all. But you talked; you gave yourself away.

RUBIO. You ought to have killed me. That was the first time in my life that I ever was afraid. I never expected they would let Norbert go. I told you that we ought to go into court and have Acacia testify that Norbert had sworn he was going to kill Faustino, but you wouldn't listen. Do you mean to tell me that you couldn't have made her do it? We could have got others, too, to say the same. Then it would have been easy; they would never have let him go. I know I made a fool of myself, but when I saw that Norbert was free, that the law—yes, and Tío Eusebio—would never stop there, that they would look somewhere else, then I was afraid for the first time. I wanted to forget. So I began to drink, which I never do, and I talked. You ought to have killed me then; you had ground for it. They were talking already in the village; that was what scared me. When I heard that song—it put the blame here. Norbert and his father suspect. After what happened before, they have their eyes open. That is the talk that has got to be stopped, no matter what comes of it. That is the danger—the crime will be known by the cause. Nothing else counts.

So long as nobody knows why he was killed, nobody will ever find out who killed him either.

ESTEBAN. But why? Why was he killed? What was the use of killing anybody?

RUBIO. I don't know. Don't ask me. Weren't you talking all the time? "If another man gets her, look out! Something happens." Then you told me she was going to be married. "I can't scare this one off; it's all over, he will take her away. I can't think...." Didn't you come to me in the morning early again and again, before it was light, and wake me up and say: "Get up, Rubio; I haven't closed my eyes all night. I must get out. To the fields! I must walk!" And then we'd take our guns and go out and walk for hours, side by side, without speaking a word. At last, when the fit had passed, and we'd put a few shots in the air so that nobody could say that we did no hunting when we went out to hunt, I'd tell you that we scared away the game; but you said we frightened evil thoughts: and down we'd sit on some hummock and then you would burst out laughing like one mad, as if some weight had been lifted from your soul, and you'd catch me around the neck and talk, and talk, and talk—you didn't know how you talked, nor what you said, nor why, nor whether it had any sense at all; but it always came to the same thing: "I am mad, crazy, a wild man! I cannot live like this. I want to die. I don't know what devil has gotten into me. This is torment, hell!" And then you'd shuffle the words again, over and over, but it was always the same, you were dying—death! And you talked death so long that one day death heard—and he came. And you know it.

ESTEBAN. Stop! Why do you have to talk?

RUBIO. Take care, master! Don't you touch me! I know what was in your mind when we were coming down

the mountain. Make no mistake. You lagged behind. Another minute and your gun would have been at your shoulder. But don't you do it, master, don't you try! We'll stick together. I know how you feel; you're sick. You never want to see me again. If that would help, I'd get out. What did I care, anyway? It was nothing to me. Whatever I got you gave me afterward. It was your idea. I never asked. I don't need money. I don't drink, I don't smoke. All I want is to rove over the mountains, to do what I like, to be free. I want to be my own master. You trusted me, and I was proud of it. I know how you feel. We are like brothers. I'll take the blame. You needn't worry. They can grind me to powder but I'll never say a word. I'll tell them I did it—it was I—because—it's none of their business—just because. I don't care what they give me: they can make it ten years, fifteen. What's the difference? Then you fix it; you have influence. Only don't let them make it too much. Get busy; cut it down. Others have done the same. In four or five years everything will have blown over. Only I don't want you to forget. When I come out we will be brothers, the same as before. We can work together; we can do what we please. Only I mean to be my own master, to have power, to feel power in my hands! Nobody can stand alone. We'll be brothers. Hush! Some one is coming—the mistress!

RAIMUNDA *enters, carrying a water-jar. She sees* ESTEBAN *and* RUBIO *and stops short, dazed. After hesitating for a moment she proceeds to fill the jar from a pitcher.*

RUBIO. Señora!

RAIMUNDA. Get out of my house! Don't you come near me! What are you doing here? I never want to see you again.

RUBIO. Oh! You are going to see me again—and hear me.

RAIMUNDA. What do you mean? This is my house.

RUBIO. Just a word. Soon we will all be in court. We had better fix it beforehand. Because a few fools open their mouths is no reason why a good man should go to prison.

RAIMUNDA. More than one will go. You don't expect to get out of it?

RUBIO. I don't know. Only one will go, but that one will be I.

RAIMUNDA. It will?

RUBIO. But when I shut my mouth I don't want other people to talk. Take it from me: what you think is not so. Norbert and his father are back of these lies; they are the ones who do all the lying. They made up that song, too. It's a lie, and they know it.

RAIMUNDA. Is that so? You have agreed then on your story? Well, I don't believe one word of it. Gossip and songs are nothing to me. I believe nothing but the truth, the truth that I know—and I know it so well that I have known it all along. I guessed it from the beginning. I might have thought—but no, I never thought anything of you. He, he might have confessed; it would have been only fair. He might have known that I would hold my tongue, not for him, but for this house—which was my father's house—for my daughter, for my own sake. But why should I keep still when everybody knows it, and the very stones shout? They sing it from the housetops.

RUBIO. So long as you keep still, the rest can sing all they want to.

RAIMUNDA. Keep still? To save you? I could scream at the very sight of you! I could raise the village!

RUBIO. Don't be a fool! What's the use?

RAIMUNDA. Of course you weren't a fool when you murdered a man. And you nearly murdered another—in this house—or had him murdered.

RUBIO. I wouldn't have been a fool if I had.

RAIMUNDA. You are a coward! You are a murderer!

RUBIO. Your wife is speaking to you, master.

ESTEBAN. Rubio!

RUBIO. You see he can hear.

RAIMUNDA. Yes, hang your head before this man. What a humiliation! You are his slave for the rest of your life. Could any fate be more horrible? Now this house has a master. Thank God, he cannot be less jealous of its honor than you!

ESTEBAN. Raimunda!

RAIMUNDA. When I talk, you interrupt. You are not afraid of me.

ESTEBAN. If I had been man enough, I would have put a bullet through my head, and have been done with it.

RUBIO. Oh, master!

ESTEBAN. No! Stop there! That's all I'll take from you. Get out! What are you waiting for? Do you want me to beg you on my knees?

RAIMUNDA. Oh!

RUBIO. No, master. I am going. [*To* RAIMUNDA] If it hadn't been for me, there wouldn't have been any murder, but you might have lost a child. Now, you have another. The blood made him faint; a bad turn, that was all. But he's better. I am a good doctor. Some time you can thank me for it. Don't forget. I'll show you how. [*Goes out.*

ESTEBAN. Don't cry any more. I can't bear to see you cry. I am not worth all these tears. I ought never to have come back; I ought to have starved amid the brambles and thickets—they should have hunted me down like a wolf.

I would not have raised my hand. Don't reproach me! Over and over again I have said to myself more than you can say. I have called myself murderer, assassin, times without number. Let me go. This is no longer my home. Turn me out! I am only waiting for them to take me. I don't go out on the road and give myself up, because I am too weak; my heart sinks; I am at the end of my tether. If you don't want me, tell me to go, and I will creep onto the highway and throw myself down in the fields, like carrion which you cast from your door.

RAIMUNDA. Yes, give yourself up! Bring shame and ruin on this house, drag my daughter's honor in the dust and mire of the village! I should have been the law to you; you ought to have thought of me. Do you suppose that I believe in these tears because this is the first time I ever saw you cry? Better you had cried your eyes out the day that wicked thought first entered your mind, rather than have turned them where you had no right. Now you cry—but what am I to do? Look at me. Nobody knows what I have been through. It could not be worse. I want to forget, but I must think—think how I can hide the shame which has fallen on this house, keep it out of men's sight, prevent a man from being dragged from this house to prison—a man I brought into it to be a father to my child! This was my father's house; here my brothers lived with the fear of God in their hearts, and from it they went to serve their King, or to marry, or to till other fields by their labor. When they re-entered these doors it was with the same honor with which they went forth. Don't cry; don't hang your head. Hold it high, as I do. In a few minutes the officers will be here to trap us all. Though the house burn, and they are in it, they shall not smell the smoke. Dry your eyes; you have wept blood. Take a sip of water—I wish it was poison.

Don't drink so fast; you are overheated. The thorns have torn your skin. You deserved knives. Let me wash you off; it makes my blood creep to look at you.

ESTEBAN. Raimunda! Wife! Pity me! You don't know. Don't talk to me. No, I am the one who must talk—I must confess as I shall confess at the hour of my doom! You don't know how I have struggled. I have wrestled all these years as with another man who was stronger than I, night and day, who was dragging me where I did not want to go.

RAIMUNDA. But when—when did that evil thought first enter your mind? When was that unhappy hour?

ESTEBAN. I don't know. It came upon me like a blight, all at once; it was there. All of us think some evil in our lives, but the thought passes away, it does no harm; it is gone. When I was a boy, one day my father beat me. Quick as a flash it came to me: "I wish he was dead!" But no sooner thought, than I was ashamed—I was ashamed to think that I had ever had such a thought. My heart stood still within me for fear that God had heard, that he would take him away. From that day I loved him more, and when he died, years afterward, I grieved as much for that thought as I did for his death, although I was a grown man. And this might have been the same; but this did not go away. It became more fixed the more I struggled to shake it off. You can't say that I did not love you. I loved you more every day! You can't say that I cast my eyes on other women—and I had no thought of her. But when I felt her by me my blood took fire. When we sat down to eat, I was afraid to look up. Wherever I turned she was there, before me—always! At night, when we were in bed, and I was lying close by you in the midnight silence of the house, all I could feel was her. I could hear her breathe as if her lips

had been at my ear. I wept for spite, for bitterness! I prayed to God, I scourged myself. I could have killed myself—and her! Words cannot tell the horror I went through. The few times that we were alone, I ran from her like a wild man. If I had stayed I don't know what might have happened: I might have kissed her, I might have dug my knife into her!

RAIMUNDA. Yes, you were mad—and you did not know it. It could only have ended in death. Why didn't we find some man for her? She could have married. You ought not to have kept her from Norbert.

ESTEBAN. It was not her marrying, it was her going away. I could not live without the feel of her; I craved her day and night. All her hate, her spite, her turning away—which she always did—cut me to the heart; then, I came to depend upon it. I could not live without it; it was part of my life. That is what it was—I didn't realize it myself, because it always seemed to me as if it could not be—such things could not really be. I was afraid to face it. But now, I have confessed it to you. It is true! It is true! I can never forgive myself, not even though you might forgive me.

RAIMUNDA. The evil cannot be cured by forgiveness; if I do not forgive you, it will not take the evil away. When I first heard of it, it seemed to me that no punishment could be too severe. Now, I don't know. To do what you did, you must have been all evil. But you were always kind and good, in season and out, to my daughter, when she was a child, when she was grown—and to me. I have seen it with my own eyes. You were good to all the servants from the day that you entered this house, to the men, to everybody who came near. You have been faithful and loyal, and worked hard for the honor of this house. A man cannot be good so long and become all bad in one day. Yet these things are;

I know it. It chills my heart. When my mother was alive —God rest her soul!—we always laughed because she used to say that many a deed had been foretold in this world that afterward took place exactly as it had been foretold. We never believed it, but now I know it is true. The dead do not leave us when they die, though we lay them in the ground. They walk by the side of those that they loved in this life, of those that they hated with a hate that was stronger than death. They are with us, day and night. We do not see them, but they whisper in our ears. They put thoughts into our minds which are evil and wicked and strange, which we never can believe could be part of ourselves.

ESTEBAN. Do you mean?....

RAIMUNDA. Vengeance! This is vengeance from the other world. My daughter's father will not forgive me in heaven; he will never accept a second father for his child. There are some things which we cannot explain in this life. A good man like you cannot, all of a sudden, cease to be good; for you were good....

ESTEBAN. I was—I was always. When you say it, you don't know what happiness, what boundless joy it is to me!

RAIMUNDA. Hush! Not so loud! I hear some one in the other part of the house. It is Norbert's father and his friends. They are going to take him away. If it had been the judge he would have come to this door. Stay here; I'll find out. Go in and wash; change your shirt. Don't let any one see you like this. You look....

ESTEBAN. Like a murderer, eh? Say it.

RAIMUNDA. No, no, Esteban! We mustn't dwell on these things. We must stop this talk; that is first. Then we can think. Acacia can go to the nuns for a few days at Encinar. They are fond of her; they always ask how she is. Then

I can write to my sister-in-law, Eugenia; she likes her. She can go to Andrada and live with her. She might marry, who knows? There are fine boys there—the town is rich—and she is the best match in our village. Then she could come back and have her children, and we would be grandfather and grandmother, and grow old with them around us, and be happy once more in this house. If only....

ESTEBAN. What?

RAIMUNDA. If only....

ESTEBAN. The dead man.

RAIMUNDA. Yes. He will always be here, between us.

ESTEBAN. Always. The rest we can forget.

[*Goes into the room.*

ACACIA *enters.*

RAIMUNDA. Acacia! Were you there?

ACACIA. Yes. Why not? Can't you see? Norbert's father is here with the men.

RAIMUNDA. What are they doing?

ACACIA. They seem more reasonable; they were surprised to find him better. Now they are waiting for the judge. He is down at Sotillo examining the men. He will come here as soon as he is done.

RAIMUNDA. I'll keep an eye on them.

ACACIA. I have something to say to you first, mother.

RAIMUNDA. You? Something to say? What is the matter with you? I am frightened. You never say anything.

ACACIA. I heard what you mean to do with me.

RAIMUNDA. You were listening at the keyhole, were you?

ACACIA. Yes, because it was my duty to hear. I had to know what you were doing with this man. It seems that I am the one who is in the way in this house. I have done

nothing wrong, so I have to take the blame, while you stay here and enjoy yourself with your husband. You forgive him and turn me out, so that you can be alone together!

RAIMUNDA. What are you talking about? Who is turning you out? Who ever put that idea into your head?

ACACIA. I heard what you said. You want to send me to the convent at Encinar and shut me up, I suppose, for the rest of my life.

RAIMUNDA. How can you say such a thing? Didn't you tell me yourself that you wanted to go there and stay for a few days with the nuns? Didn't I refuse to let you go for fear that you would never come back, if you once saw the inside of the cloister? How often have you begged me to let you go to your Aunt Eugenia? Now, when it would be a good thing for us all, for the good of the family, which is your family—I tell you that we must hold our heads high—now what do you want me to do? Do you expect me to give up my husband—the man it was your duty to love as a father?

ACACIA. You are as bad as Juliana. I suppose it was all my fault?

RAIMUNDA. I don't say that. But he never looked on you as a daughter because you were never a daughter to him.

ACACIA. I suppose I flaunted myself in his face? I suppose I made him kill Faustino?

RAIMUNDA. Not so loud! Somebody might hear!

ACACIA. Well, this time you won't find it so easy to have your way. You want to save this man and hush it up, but I am going to tell what I know to the judge, to everybody. I have only my honor to think of, not that of a man who hasn't any, who never had any—who is a criminal!

RAIMUNDA. Silence! Not so loud! It freezes my heart

to hear you. You hate him—and I had almost forgiven him!

ACACIA. Yes, I do hate him. I always did hate him, and he knows it. If he doesn't want me to speak, to denounce him, let him kill me. I can die—that is what I can do—die. Let him kill me! Then, perhaps, once for all, you might learn to hate him.

RAIMUNDA. Hush, I say!—Here he comes. [ESTEBAN *enters*] Esteban!

ESTEBAN. She is right. She is not the one who ought to go. Only I don't want her to give me up. I will do it myself. I am strong now. I will go out on the road to meet them. Let me go, Raimunda. You have your child. You forgive me, but she never will. She hated me from the beginning.

RAIMUNDA. No, Esteban, don't you go! Esteban, my life!

ESTEBAN. No, let me go, or I will call Norbert's father. I will tell him....

RAIMUNDA. [*To* ACACIA] Now you see what you have done. It was your fault. Esteban! Esteban!

ACACIA. Mother, don't let him go!

RAIMUNDA. Ah!

ESTEBAN. No, she wants to betray me. Why did you hate me like this? You never once called me father. You don't know how I loved you!

ACACIA. Mother, mother——

ESTEBAN. *La Malquerida!* The Passion Flower! I hang my head. But once—once how I could have loved you!

RAIMUNDA. For once, call him father.

ESTEBAN. She will never forgive me.

RAIMUNDA. But she must! Throw your arms about his

neck. Call him father. Even the dead will forgive us then, and be happy in our happiness.

ESTEBAN. Daughter!

ACACIA. Esteban!.... My God! Esteban!

ESTEBAN. Ah!

RAIMUNDA. But you don't call him father. Has she fainted? Ah! Lip to lip, and you clutch her in your arms! Let go, let go! Now I see why you won't call him father. Now I see that it was your fault—and I curse you!

ACACIA. Yes, it was. Kill me! It is true, it is true! He is the only man I ever loved.

ESTEBAN. Ah!

RAIMUNDA. What do you say? What is that? I will kill you—yes, and be damned with it!

ESTEBAN. Stand back!

ACACIA. Save me!

ESTEBAN. Stand back, I say!

RAIMUNDA. Ah! Now I see! It is plain to me now. And it is just as well! What is one murder to me? We can all die. Here! Come, everybody! The murderer! I have the murderer! Take this wicked woman, for she is not my child!

ACACIA. Run! Get away!

ESTEBAN. Yes, together—to hell! For I am damned for love of you. Come! They can hunt us like wild beasts among the rocks. To love you and hold you, I will be as the wild beasts, that know neither father nor mother!

RAIMUNDA. Help! Help! Come quick! The murderer! The murderer!

RUBIO, BERNABÉ *and* JULIANA *appear simultaneously at different doors, followed by others from the village.*

ESTEBAN. Out of my way! Take care who crosses me!

RAIMUNDA. Stay where you are!—The murderer!

ESTEBAN. Out of my way, I tell you!

RAIMUNDA. Over my dead body!

ESTEBAN. Yes— [*Raising his gun he shoots* RAIMUNDA.

RAIMUNDA. Ah!

JULIANA. God in heaven!—Raimunda!

RUBIO. What have you done?

A MAN. Kill him!

ESTEBAN. Yes, kill me! I don't defend myself.

BERNABÉ. No! Put the law on him!

JULIANA. It was this man, this wretched man!—Raimunda!—He has killed her!—Raimunda! Don't you hear?

RAIMUNDA. Yes, Juliana. Don't let me die without confession. I am dying now. This blood.... No matter—Acacia! Acacia!

JULIANA. Acacia!—Where is she?

ACACIA. Mother, mother!

RAIMUNDA. Ah! Then you are not crying for him? It consoles me.

ACACIA. No, mother! You are my mother!

JULIANA. She is dying! Quick—Raimunda!

ACACIA. Mother, mother!

RAIMUNDA. This man cannot harm you now. You are saved. Blessed be the blood that saves, the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Curtain

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